



**ASYCUDA**  
**REPORT**  
**2021/22**







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**REPORT**  
2021/22



UNITED NATIONS  
**UNCTAD**

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UNCTAD/TCS/DTL/INF/2022/5

*This report is dedicated to the  
memory of our colleagues*



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# FOREWORD

UNCTAD held its 15<sup>th</sup> quadrennial conference in October 2021. During UNCTAD15, the value of ASYCUDA's contribution was reiterated and reinforced within the conference outcome document – The Bridgetown Covenant<sup>1</sup> – with member States urging that UNCTAD continue to work with our membership to collaboratively assist in the implementation of the ASYCUDA Programme's technical assistance and software solutions.

At the time of publication, ASYCUDA's customs management software, ASYCUDAWorld, was active in 101 countries and territories – covering every habitable continent of the world – and while UNCTAD's flagship customs software continues to help member States grow their economies by accelerating customs clearance processes, the Programme is increasingly called upon to broaden the scope of its support. For example, more and more member States are seeking the ASYCUDA Programme's assistance to electronically connect government departments involved in international trade and customs clearance. As such, the Programme supported governments in the development of bespoke single window systems – essentially a one-stop-shop for traders, customs, and Partner Government Agencies to clear consignments.



<sup>1</sup> <https://unctad.org/webflyer/bridgetown-covenant>



This new trend has led the Programme to develop partnerships – with both public and private sectors – to produce new solutions and tools, such as eCITES and ASYHUB, that complement and improve customs clearance processes. Still, helping countries to streamline and improve their own domestic regulations covering international trade remained one of its core deliveries.

While the ASYCUDA Programme's 2020 Annual Report highlighted activities that supported member States during the most intense period of the COVID-19 pandemic to date and beyond, this report identifies encouraging future promise – outlining how the ASYCUDA Programme has helped user countries to grow and thrive this past year and will continue to do so. However, it is clear that the current economic environment poses financial challenges and presents a great deal of uncertainty. I am confident that the ASYCUDA Programme will continue to provide trade facilitation support and technical solutions to governments that enable them to increase public revenues and transparency, reduce the time and cost of international trade and deliver against their SDG commitments, as we strive to accelerate progress in this decade of action.

**Shamika N. Sirimanne,**  
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# ABBREVIATIONS

|                        |                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ABAL</b>            | Advanced Basic Assembly Language                                                                                |
| <b>ASYADN</b>          | ASYCUDA Automatic Data Notification Tool                                                                        |
| <b>ASYATO</b>          | ASYCUDA Extraction Tool for the African Trade Observatory                                                       |
| <b>ASYHUB</b>          | ASYCUDA Data Exchange and Data Integration Platform                                                             |
| <b>ASYPM</b>           | ASYCUDA Automated System for Performance Measurement                                                            |
| <b>ASYREC</b>          | ASYCUDA Automated System for Relief Consignments                                                                |
| <b>BAL</b>             | Basic Assembly Language                                                                                         |
| <b>DGMT</b>            | Digitizing Global Maritime Trade                                                                                |
| <b>EBRD</b>            | European Bank for Reconstruction and Development                                                                |
| <b>eCITES</b>          | ASYCUDA's Electronic Permit Management and Exchange System for Customs Control of Trade in CITES-listed Species |
| <b>EDF</b>             | European Development Fund                                                                                       |
| <b>EIF</b>             | European Investment Fund                                                                                        |
| <b>eSW</b>             | Electronic Single Window                                                                                        |
| <b>EU</b>              | European Union                                                                                                  |
| <b>GiZ</b>             | German Agency for International Cooperation                                                                     |
| <b>IMPACT</b>          | Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade project                                                             |
| <b>IT</b>              | Information Technology                                                                                          |
| <b>ITC</b>             | International Trade Centre                                                                                      |
| <b>LDC</b>             | Least Developed Country                                                                                         |
| <b>LLDC</b>            | Landlocked Developing Country                                                                                   |
| <b>MOU</b>             | Memorandum of Understanding                                                                                     |
| <b>MRVE</b>            | Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Enforcement Mechanism                                                   |
| <b>PACER Plus</b>      | Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relation                                                                   |
| <b>PGA</b>             | Partner Government Agency                                                                                       |
| <b>PLA / EST / ACT</b> | Place of Arrival / Estimated Time of Arrival / Actual Arrival                                                   |
| <b>PRISE</b>           | Pacific Regional Integration Support project                                                                    |
| <b>SaaS</b>            | Software as a Service                                                                                           |
| <b>SIDS</b>            | Small Island Developing States                                                                                  |
| <b>SPC</b>             | Pacific Community                                                                                               |
| <b>SW</b>              | Single Window                                                                                                   |
| <b>TFA</b>             | Trade Facilitation Agreement                                                                                    |
| <b>UFZA</b>            | Uganda Free Zones Authority                                                                                     |
| <b>UNBS</b>            | Uganda National Bureau of Standards                                                                             |
| <b>UNDA</b>            | United Nations Development Account                                                                              |

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the activities, achievements, impact and financial situation of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) Programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It is intended for the Programme's donors, development partners and beneficiary countries, as well as those interested in customs reform, trade facilitation and the automation of regulatory procedures.

In 2021 the ASYCUDA Programme celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the past four decades, it has provided technical assistance to more than 100 countries and territories around the world.

The Programme focuses on reforming, streamlining and automating customs clearance processes. It strives to provide trade facilitation and strengthen institutions in member States – increasing customs revenue and transparency, reducing time and cost of trade procedures and improving the capacities of its personnel through the implementation of its flagship customs management software, ASYCUDAWorld. This report describes the launch of ASYCUDAWorld in countries such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, and the expansion of the list of ASYCUDA user-countries with Iraq, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau and Tajikistan.

The Programme's scope has gradually expanded to enabling electronic information exchange between customs and Partner Government Agencies (PGAs); generating trade statistics; monitoring trade flows across borders, and; enhancing the operational performance and institutional integrity of customs. More countries are expressing an interest in the Programme's work and in the ASYCUDA-based electronic single window concept. In cooperation with trade agencies and organizations, new tools and modules (such as ASYADN, ASYHUB, ASYREC and eCITES) are being implemented. This report aims to detail the benefits of these solutions as well as the progress made in their development and implementation.

Despite many countries continuing to endure the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions, this report highlights some of the major achievements of governments and UNCTAD's ASYCUDA Programme in accelerating trade facilitation while preparing for an eventual post-pandemic world. ASYCUDA's strategy to ensure business continuity in customs during the pandemic was detailed in last year's annual report.<sup>2</sup> This report describes how the ASYCUDA Programme empowers LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to increase transparency and accountability while improving risk management practices. It also details how the Programme helps developing country governments to increase customs revenues while reducing the time and cost of doing so to those engaging in international trade.

2 [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda2021d2_en.pdf)

# 1



## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### a. Background

Historically, customs departments in transition economies, developing countries and least developed countries, were burdened with cumbersome and inefficient procedures. Handling times were long and processing the release of goods was laborious, being completed manually by multiple stakeholders (e.g., customs officers, economic operators, Partner Government Agencies, etc.) without appropriate and systematic verification. Customs departments operating in a largely paper-based environment, faced a high risk of error and fraud. In some cases, unpaid duties and taxes went undetected, and goods were under-declared or even unrecorded.



The ASYCUDA Programme was created to support the efforts of developing countries to modernize and automate their customs clearance processes, which ultimately involved the simplification, reform and automation of a member country's entire national customs business. This was achieved by updating ways of working and legislative policies to align with international standards and best practices that enhanced the management and facilitation of procedures. But fundamentally, the Programme also developed an application software for use by customs staff (e.g., office chiefs, inspectors, chief inspectors, cashiers, etc.), economic operators (e.g., brokers, transporters, etc.) and Partner Government Agencies (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, etc.). This software was provided to member States in areas where the ASYCUDA Programme was engaged in a technical capacity through an established national technical assistance project.

## b. Four Decades of Pioneering Technological Innovation for Trade Facilitation



In the early 1980s, UNCTAD received a request from ECOWAS to assist in the compilation of foreign trade statistics in their member States. The modernization of customs clearance procedures was found to be a pre-requisite to achieving quality results. This aligned well with customs offices' focus on facilitating and promoting trade while streamlining procedures, implementing effective controls and ensuring correct revenue collection. As a result, the ASYCUDA Programme was established by UNCTAD in 1981.

The first version of the ASYCUDA customs management system, implemented and deployed in Mali and Mauritania during the mid-eighties, ran on some of the very first personal computers (PCs). At that time PCs were far from mainstream, but the initiative paid off and contributed to building UNCTAD and its ASYCUDA Programme's reputation in mobilizing technology to facilitate international trade. The second version, ASYCUDA V2, was released in the late eighties and deployed until the mid-nineties. It ran on one of the first multi-user, multi-tasking operating systems, PROLOGUE, and was developed using BAL and ABAL programming languages. In the mid-nineties ASYCUDA++, the third version, was launched using the client-server architecture that became mainstream in business during that era – UNIX on servers and MS Windows on clients, with respectively C++ and C

as programming languages. The subsequent evolution of information technology capabilities led to centralized computing as well as flexibility for upgrade and interoperability, accessibility and ease of development. ASYCUDA++ was deployed in countries until circa 2005 when the latest version of ASYCUDA's customs management software, ASYCUDAWorld, was released – relying on Internet and web technologies, using the Java programming language, bringing the power of Relational Database Management Systems, asymmetric encryption algorithms for enhanced security, XML language for transmitting data, and featuring paperless e-documents mirroring real-life paper forms (What You See Is What You Get).

## c. UNCTAD 15's Bridgetown Covenant and ASYCUDA's Mandate



As an outcome of UNCTAD 15, the organization's quadrennial ministerial conference, the mandate of the ASYCUDA Programme was renewed and reaffirmed in paragraph 127 (c) of the Bridgetown Covenant, where it is noted that UNCTAD should "continue to provide assistance to developing countries to design and implement policies and actions aimed at improving the efficiency of trade transactions as well as the management of transport operations; it should also continue to cooperate with member States in implementing the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA); UNCTAD should also continue its work on taxation as it relates to investment policy".

UNCTAD's trade facilitation work – the method through which ASYCUDA helps to improve transparency and accountability while improving risk management practices and growing user countries' economies – was also strengthened and invigorated with renewed commitment via Paragraph 127 (n) which states that UNCTAD should "continue and reinforce its work through its three pillars to support implementation of trade facilitation reforms, including the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, and enhance its support to the development and the implementation of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks that reduce trade transaction costs".

The ASYCUDA Programme remains driven by official requests from member States for its assistance. Recently, it has led to the Programme broadening its scope and intervention to assist PGAs in modernizing and automating their trade procedures. At the request of member States, the Programme now assists in the development and implementation of electronic single window solutions – based on ASYCUDA technology and offering an integrated platform to trade-related stakeholders. Additionally, the Programme has developed standalone solutions – such as ASYPM, ASYREC and eCITES – to facilitate international trade in cooperation with international organizations and trade agencies.



## d. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ASYCUDA makes a significant contribution to progress towards the SDGs in beneficiary countries. It impacts various SDGs, directly and indirectly. Among major contributions, the Programme's institutional strengthening, including via its critical impact on domestic resource mobilization and customs personnel's capacities, contributes to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### 1 NO POVERTY



#### End poverty in all its forms everywhere

- Digitalization, procedural harmonization and simplification, intergovernmental cooperation, electronic exchange of information
- Customs' contribution to national revenue through revenue collections, and the subsequent investment of revenues into national development programmes

### 2 ZERO HUNGER



#### End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

- Improving food security and food safety through strengthening customs and inter-agency controls at the borders; the digitalization of issuance and monitoring of use of phytosanitary and veterinary certificates; integrated quota monitoring for agricultural exports and imports

### 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



#### Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- Restrictions on the importation of certain types of alcohol, which are reflected in control procedures, licensing, special quotas, the use of sampling and testing services, and laboratorial analyses
- Implementation of automated tools for preventing illicit trade by securing the supply chain (licensing of manufactures, importers, exporters, carriers, warehousekeepers of tobacco products or manufacturing equipment, registration of business premises etc. ), tracking and tracing of tobacco consignments, record keeping, implementation of effective measures for countering illicit trade, reporting and enforcement information sharing
- Strengthening of customs and inter-agency controls at the borders of pharmaceutical products, drugs precursors, introduction of electronic certificates for pharmaceutical goods and their efficient control in ASYCUDA software and single window environments

### 5 GENDER EQUALITY



#### Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- ASYCUDA advocates for gender parity and empowerment in the appointment of local ASYCUDA teams
- The Programme drafted an ambitious gender balance strategy in order to achieve gender parity by 2029

### 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



#### Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- As customs applies in their controls the international conventions of Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm water quality is expected to improve by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials
- Implementing electronic systems for exchanging information on or controlling the movements of goods under Multilateral Environmental Agreements

### 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



#### Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- Customs makes a key contribution to facilitating trade, enabling access to global value chains, innovation and employment opportunities
- By embedding early taking of ownership and sustainability in its TA approach and the use of ASYCUDA, which has always combined state-of-the-art advanced technologies with proven in-the-field expertise, UNCTAD ensures an efficient and tailored support to countries thus contributing to their ICT infrastructure development and upgrade, especially in least developed countries and Africa, and by improving regional and trans-border infrastructure

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



### Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- By simplifying customs processes, sustainable modernization and digitalization initiatives promoting early taking of ownership by governments, the ASYCUDA Programme contributes to towards lowering the international market's barriers to entry for SME/SMLs
- Through ASYCUDA, which has always combined state-of-the-art advanced technologies with proven in-the-field expertise, and its associated capacity building component, UNCTAD contributes to increasing access to information and communication technology in government and within the trade community

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



### Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- By providing state-of-the-art solution for the processing of trade data supporting modernized customs clearance processes the ASYCUDA programme helps member countries in Africa, LLDCs and SIDSs improve their trade environment and thus attractiveness for FDI

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



### Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- Promoting development of customs and trade infrastructure (ports, logistics terminals, warehouses, supply chains in cities)
- Ongoing discussion between the ASYCUDA Programme and UNESCO
- MOU between OCHA and UNCTAD – ASYREC

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



### Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- Implementing electronic systems for exchanging information on or controlling the movements of goods under Multilateral Environmental Agreements

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION



### Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- ASYCUDA systems for monitoring the legal trade of and preventing the illegal trade in ozone depleting substances and timber

## 15 LIFE ON LAND



### Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and stop biodiversity loss

- Customs contributes to protecting society from unwanted pests and preventing the flow of illicit wildlife products by applying health and agricultural policies, and the IPCC Convention. Customs also helps to take urgent action to end poaching and the trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products by applying the CITES Convention
- eCITES Electronic Permitting System developed and implemented under a MOU between the CITES Secretariat and UNCTAD with support from Swiss government

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

- Simplification and digitalization of procedures to decrease human interactions, thus contributing to good governance, transparency and accountability, and the fight against corruption

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



### Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

- ASYCUDA's customs management system, by applying international standards, trade-related agreements, and through collaborating with other national authorities, countries and international agencies such as the WCO, contributes to increased efficiency and coordination, strengthened resource mobilization and trade facilitation and statistics. In turn this contributes to ensuring sustainable development. Further, the ASYCUDA Programme organizes a multitude of study tours, technical and functional training sessions for customs delegations to visit and learn from experiences in implementing new technology and/or new infrastructure in other parts of the world, directly contributing to North-South and South-South international and regional cooperation, ensuring capacity building and transfer of know-how

## e. Overview of ASYCUDA Systems and Tools

ASYCUDAWorld is ASYCUDA's flagship IT system and the latest version of the Programme's customs management software.

At the request of member States, in 2012, ASYCUDA broadened its scope to include advising governments on the conceptualization, development and implementation of single windows for international trade, offering an integrated platform to trade-related stakeholders and improved information sharing.

The following are standalone systems developed by ASYCUDA that can be used by customs offices irrespective of if they choose to run ASYCUDAWorld or not.



The Automated System for Performance Measurement (ASYPM), developed in 2014, detects poor practice and increases operational efficiency. It uses 29 performance indicators to generate tables; dynamic graphs and; other diagrams that provide live and accurate information on all customs operations.<sup>3</sup>



eCITES, developed in 2018 with UNEP's CITES Secretariat, is a cloud-based electronic permit system offering automated support for permit application, processing, issuance and reporting for the international trade of endangered species of fauna and flora.<sup>4</sup>



ASYHUB is an open, standardized, platform developed in 2020 for the processing and integration of data between ASYCUDAWorld and other external systems. The platform is designed to be cloud-native, using micro service-centred principles.<sup>5</sup>



ASYREC, developed in cooperation with OCHA in 2020, facilitates and expedites the processing of international relief during humanitarian crisis, natural disasters, and complex emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>



3 [https://asycuda.org/wp-content/uploads/ASYPM\\_flyer.pdf](https://asycuda.org/wp-content/uploads/ASYPM_flyer.pdf)

4 [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda\\_inf2019d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda_inf2019d2_en.pdf)

5 <https://www.asyhub.org/>

6 <https://www.asyrec.asycuda.org/>

# 2 THE ASYCUDA COMMUNITY

## AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

-  Anguilla
-  Antigua and Barbuda
-  Aruba
-  Barbados
-  Belize
-  Bolivia
-  Caribbean Netherlands
-  Curaçao
-  Dominica
-  El Salvador
-  Grenada
-  Guyana
-  Haiti
-  Jamaica
-  Montserrat
-  Nicaragua
-  Puerto Rico
-  Saint Kitts and Nevis
-  Saint Lucia
-  Saint Pierre and Miquelon
-  Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
-  Suriname
-  Trinidad and Tobago
-  Turks and Caicos
-  Venezuela

## AFRICA

-  Angola
-  Benin
-  Burkina Faso
-  Burundi
-  Cabo Verde
-  Central African Republic
-  Chad
-  Comoros
-  Congo
-  Côte d'Ivoire
-  D.R. Congo
-  Djibouti
-  Equatorial Guinea
-  Eritrea
-  Eswatini (former Swaziland)
-  Gabon
-  Gambia
-  Guinea
-  Guinea-Bissau
-  Lesotho
-  Liberia
-  Madagascar
-  Malawi
-  Mali
-  Mauritania
-  Mozambique
-  Namibia
-  Niger
-  Rwanda
-  Saint Helena
-  Sao Tome and Principe
-  Seychelles
-  Sierra Leone
-  Sudan
-  Togo
-  Uganda
-  Zambia
-  Zimbabwe

## MIDDLE EAST

-  Iraq
-  Jordan
-  Lebanon
-  Palestine
-  Syria
-  Yemen

## EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

-  Afghanistan
-  Albania
-  Bosnia and Herzegovina
-  Georgia
-  Gibraltar
-  Kazakhstan
-  Kosovo
-  Moldova
-  Tajikistan
-  Turkmenistan

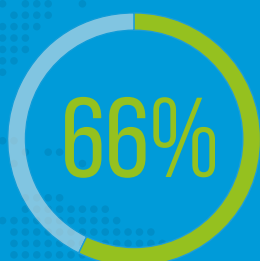
## ASIA AND PACIFIC ISLANDS

-  Bangladesh
-  Cambodia
-  Cook Islands
-  Fiji
-  Kiribati
-  Lao PDR
-  Maldives
-  Marshall Islands
-  Micronesia (FSM)
-  Nauru
-  Nepal
-  New Caledonia
-  Niue
-  Palau
-  Papua New Guinea
-  Samoa
-  Solomon Islands
-  Sri Lanka
-  Timor-Leste
-  Tonga
-  Tuvalu
-  Vanuatu

# ASYCUDA SYSTEMS OPERATING IN



LEAST DEVELOPED  
COUNTRIES



LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING  
COUNTRIES



SMALL ISLAND  
DEVELOPING STATES

## a. User Countries

At the time of publication, ASYCUDA systems are running or being implemented in 101 countries, including 38 LDCs (out of 46), 21 LLDCs (out of 32) and 41 SIDS (out of 58).

Six additional countries and territories joined the ASYCUDA community in the reporting period: Iraq, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau and Tajikistan for ASYCUDAWorld, and Mozambique for eCITES.



## b. Staff

The ASYCUDA Programme counts 82 continuous, permanent, fixed-term and temporary staff – with 19 at headquarters (Geneva, Switzerland) and 63 in the field (35 different cities).

The Programme has always valued diversity – whether it is geographical, cultural, competency or gender based.

Geographically, every habitable continent of the world is represented within ASYCUDA staff. Out of 82 staff, 36 are Africans, 18 are Europeans, 12 come from the Americas and the Caribbean, 9 from the Middle East and 7 from Asia and the Pacific.

In terms of competencies, being a technical cooperation programme, 57% of ASYCUDA Programme staff are IT experts; 37% are project officers, customs experts, senior coordinators and programme management officers; and the remaining 6% consist of the ASYCUDA programme chief, programme management assistants, graphic designer and public information officer.

The ASYCUDA Programme actively promotes gender diversity and equality in its work and within its team. In line with UNCTAD policies, the Programme actively mainstreams a gender perspective into every project, including through its capacity building activities. Nevertheless, the Programme's gender balance needs improving, with only 12 of the Programme's 82 staff being female, and only three of these holding managerial positions. The ASYCUDA Programme drafted an ambitious gender balance strategy that would allow the Programme to reach gender parity by 2029, assuming that it maintains its growth trajectory in terms of the number of projects signed and budget raised. The measures identified to reach this objective include establishing and supporting a shared vision for gender parity, creating incentives for female candidates to apply, improving standards for workforce planning and recruitment strategies, improving outreach and enhancing workplace inclusiveness.

# 3

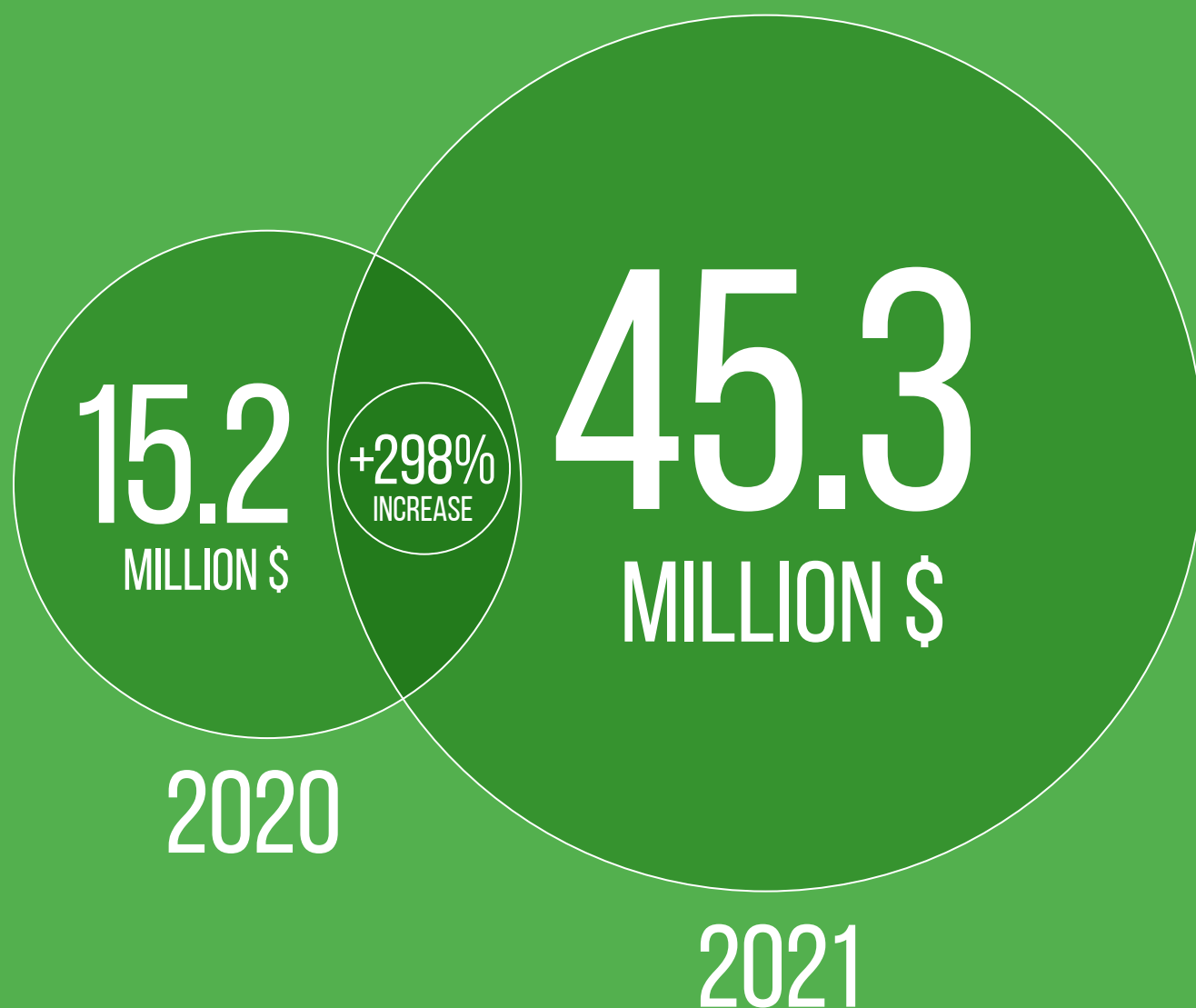
## FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

### a. ASYCUDA Programme Budget

In 2021, the budget raised by the ASYCUDA Programme exceeded \$45.3 million, almost twice the previous high of \$24 million achieved in 2018. Compared with 2020, the Programme recorded a 298% budgetary increase, up from \$15.2 million.

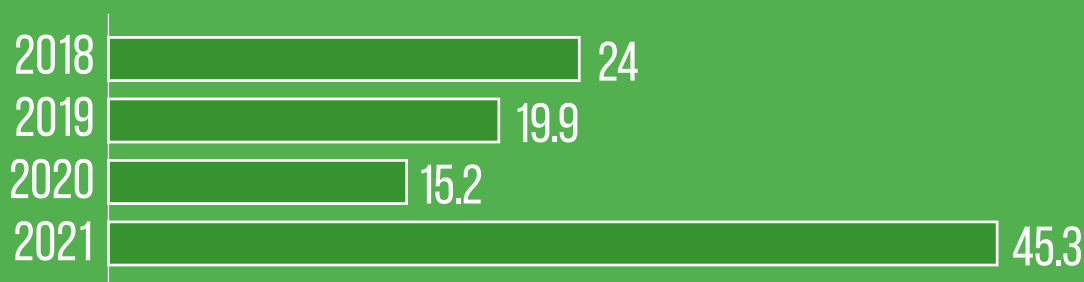
30 new projects and extensions were signed in 2021, compared to 31 in 2020. The increase in budget stems from two new technical assistance projects – ASYCUDAWorld implementation in Iraq (\$13+ million) and in the Pacific Islands (\$11+ million) – which account for 56% of the total 2021 budget raised.

In 2020, the ASYCUDA Programme focused its assistance on tackling the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing further paperless procedures; reducing direct interaction between traders, economic operators and customs officers; adjusting risk management strategies; and expediting the clearance of tax-adjusted medical supplies and equipment imports. Indeed, the pandemic has reinforced the economic need for further automation, digitalization and transparency of trade processes and procedures. As a result, in 2021, economies are increasingly realizing the benefits of complying with the WTO Trade Facilitation



# ASYCUDA

## BUDGET EVOLUTION, IN MILLION \$



Agreement and the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention through the enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld implementation. As evidence of this, 19 projects and extensions out of 30 focus on the consolidation and enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld through migration to the latest version of the software and the development of additional tailored modules.

In 2021, four projects focus on the installation and national launch of ASYCUDAWorld (Chad, Iraq, Pacific ICPS and Republic of Central Africa), which demonstrates the ongoing interest of member States in ASYCUDA's customs management system.

## New ASYCUDA Projects Signed Between 1 January – 31 December 2021

| Country/Region<br>Project Code     | Project Title                                                                                                                     | Budget (\$) | Category <sup>a</sup> | Donor            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Afghanistan<br>AFG0THBU/2          | Emergency Funding to Support ASYCUDA Operation in Afghanistan                                                                     | 499'000     | E                     | UNDP             |
| Afghanistan<br>AFG0THBU/3          | Emergency Assistance to Support ASYCUDA Exemptions Module in Afghanistan                                                          | 3'000'000   | E                     | UNDP             |
| Antigua and Barbuda<br>ANT0TKBC    | ASYCUDAWorld Upgrade in the Antigua and Barbuda Customs and Excise Division                                                       | 185'800     | E                     | EU               |
| Aruba<br>ARU0TKAY                  | ASYCUDAWorld Consolidation at the Aruba Customs and Excise Department                                                             | 450'000     | E                     | Government       |
| Barbados<br>BAR0TJBM               | Implementation of the Barbados Electronic Single Window for Trade                                                                 | 2'105'000   | E                     | Government       |
| Burkina Faso<br>BKF0TKAO           | Development of Interfaces with eDOUANES                                                                                           | 722'070     | E                     | WB               |
| Chad<br>CHD0TJQA                   | ASYCUDAWorld Migration                                                                                                            | 1'958'290   | E                     | WB               |
| Cambodia and Sri Lanka<br>INT0TIBB | Piloting ASYHUB Cambodia and Sri Lanka                                                                                            | 710'000     | E                     | GiZ              |
| Pacific Islands<br>INT0TJBO        | Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT)                                                                              | 11'830'000  | N                     | EU               |
| Iraq<br>IRQ0TKAA                   | Automatization and Modernization of Customs                                                                                       | 13'795'676  | N                     | Government       |
| Jamaica<br>JAM0TKAN                | ASYCUDAWorld Upgrade Project at the Jamaica Customs Agency                                                                        | 475'000     | N                     | Government       |
| Jordan<br>JOR0TJBN                 | JORDAN Trade for Employment : Accelerating the Clearance Process Through the Use of Information Technology Systems "ASYCUDAWorld" | 388'656     | N                     | GiZ              |
| Kazakhstan<br>KAZ0TJBR             | Technical Support and Modernization of ASTANA-1                                                                                   | 54'240      | N                     | Government       |
| Kazakhstan<br>KAZ0TKAE             | Technical Support and Upgrade of IS ASTANA-1                                                                                      | 386'560     | N                     | Government       |
| Kazakhstan<br>KAZ0TKAE/2           | Technical Support and Upgrade of IS ASTANA-1                                                                                      | 48'560      | E                     | Government       |
| Maldives<br>MDV0THBK               | ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Asia Region for Maldives                                                                        | 9'605       | E                     | Government       |
| Mali<br>MLI0TKAG                   | Enhancement of ASYCUDA                                                                                                            | 1'780'880   | N                     | Government       |
| Mali<br>MLI0TKBA                   | Implementation of ASYVal Module                                                                                                   | 70'000      | N                     | Expertise France |

| Country/Region<br>Project Code    | Project Title                                                               | Budget (\$)       | Category <sup>a</sup> | Donor               |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Moldova<br>MOLOTJBE               | Implementation of Pre-Arrival Processing                                    | 70'900            | E                     | GIZ                 |
| Moldova<br>MOLOTKAP               | Digitalization of Moldova Customs Service                                   | 473'000           | N                     | EBRD                |
| Mozambique<br>MOZOTKAC            | Implementation of e-CITES                                                   | 200'000           | N                     | WB                  |
| African Countries<br>RAFOTKAP     | Implementation of ASYATO in Selected African Countries                      | 243'600           | N                     | ITC<br>(through EU) |
| Caribbean Netherlands<br>RLAOT3AD | ASYCUDAWorld Support to the Tax Administration of the Caribbean Netherlands | 209'000           | E                     | Government          |
| Sudan<br>SUDOTJBT                 | ASYCUDA Support Mechanism                                                   | 68'930            | N                     | Government          |
| Rep. of Central Africa<br>TJBF    | ASYCUDAWorld Migration                                                      | 1'220'000         | N                     | EU                  |
| Afghanistan<br>TLAB               | Multi Agency Trust Fund                                                     | 500'000           | N                     |                     |
| Togo<br>TOGOTKAT                  | Upgrade to the Latest ASYCUDAWorld Version                                  | 385'330           | N                     | Government          |
| Vanuatu<br>VANOTHB                | Vanuatu Single Window Project                                               | 436'790           | E                     | Australia           |
| Vanuatu<br>VANOTKAF               | ASYCUDA-CDS Interface Project                                               | 200'000           | N                     | EIF                 |
| Zimbabwe<br>ZIMOTJBB              | Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window                                           | 2'844'041         | N                     | Government          |
| <b>Total</b>                      |                                                                             | <b>45'320'928</b> |                       |                     |

<sup>a</sup> (E) Extension, (N) New project.

As in previous years, member States requested that the Programme support them with building electronic single window systems. Such systems make it easier for traders importing and exporting goods to comply with government requirements, acting as an electronic one-stop-shop for interactions with customs and other PGAs. They also increase transparency by helping to ensure clearance status data is accurate, reliable and available online. In 2021, three technical cooperation projects were signed with Barbados, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe for the implementation of an electronic single window. For Vanuatu, the project consists of enhancing existing services and increasing the number of PGAs involved in the Vanuatu electronic single window system, which is based on ASYCUDA technology and was launched in 2020. The ASYCUDA Programme has enjoyed strong growth in this specialization since the first single window cooperation project was signed with Rwanda in 2012. By December 2021, eleven member States were running or implementing an ASYCUDA-based single window platform (Barbados, Burundi, Comoros, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe).

The remaining four projects and extensions signed in 2021 relate to the implementation of other ASYCUDA systems, such as ASYHUB in Cambodia and Sri Lanka, eCITES in Mozambique and ASYATO in selected African countries.

Project funding stems from beneficiary governments (50%), the European Union (30%), UNDP (8%), the World Bank (6%), GiZ (3%), EBRD (1%), the Government of Australia (1%), and from other entities such as EIF, ITC and Expertise France (1%). In 2021, the ASYCUDA Programme and beneficiary governments jointly mobilized efforts to secure more funding from donors. The ASYCUDA Programme is committed to supporting member States – with a particular focus on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS – including assisting them with securing funds for the implementation of ASYCUDA systems. This work has grown in importance since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shone a light on the benefits that technological solutions and digitization can bring to customs offices, particularly in developing countries. This has resulted in: the European Union financing an \$11+ million project for the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in the Pacific Islands; UNDP funding a \$3 million project for the enhancement of ASYCUDAWorld in Afghanistan; the World Bank contributing \$2 million for the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in Chad.

## b. Expenditure

In 2021, ASYCUDA spent \$18.4 million in staff costs (78%) and consultants (7%) at headquarters and in the field, as well as official travel (2%), programme support costs (11%) and other costs such as hardware and equipment (2%). It continued to be UNCTAD's largest technical assistance activity, accounting for more than 44% of total technical cooperation delivery in 2021.

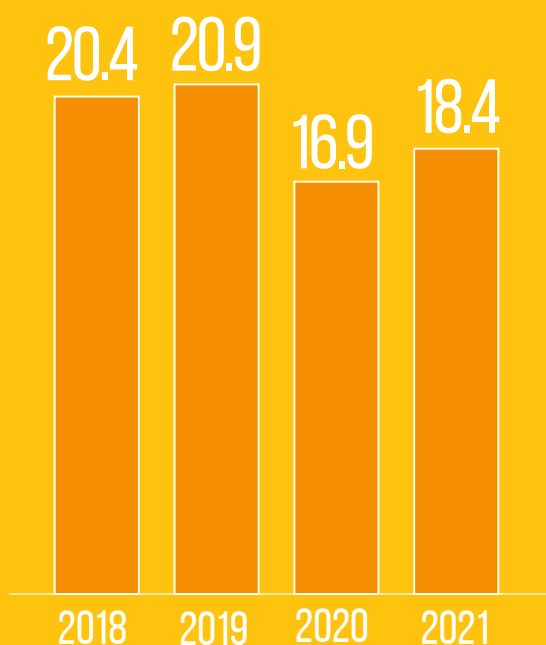
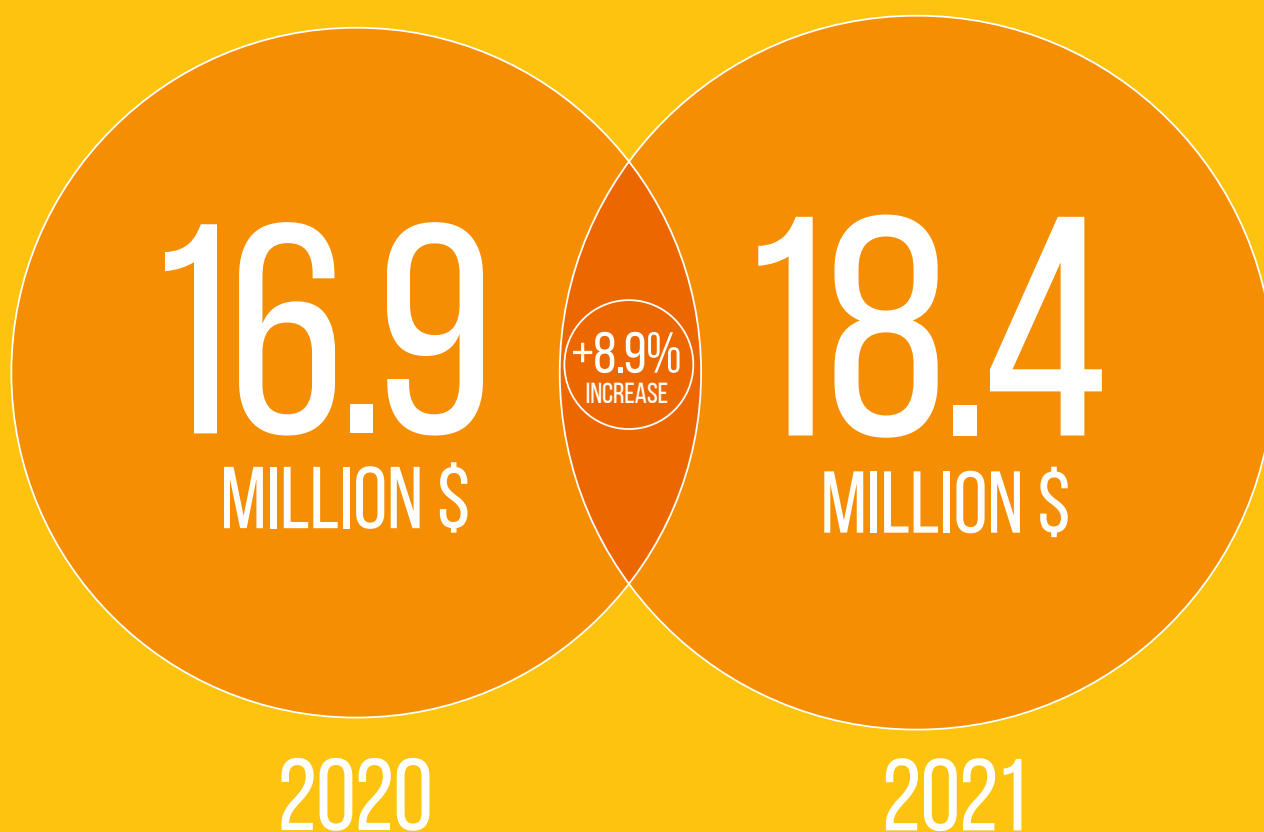
**44%**  **OF UNCTAD**  
**TECHNICAL COOPERATION**  
**DELIVERY IN 2021**

---

**ASYCUDA**  
 CONTINUES TO BE UNCTAD'S LARGEST  
 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITY

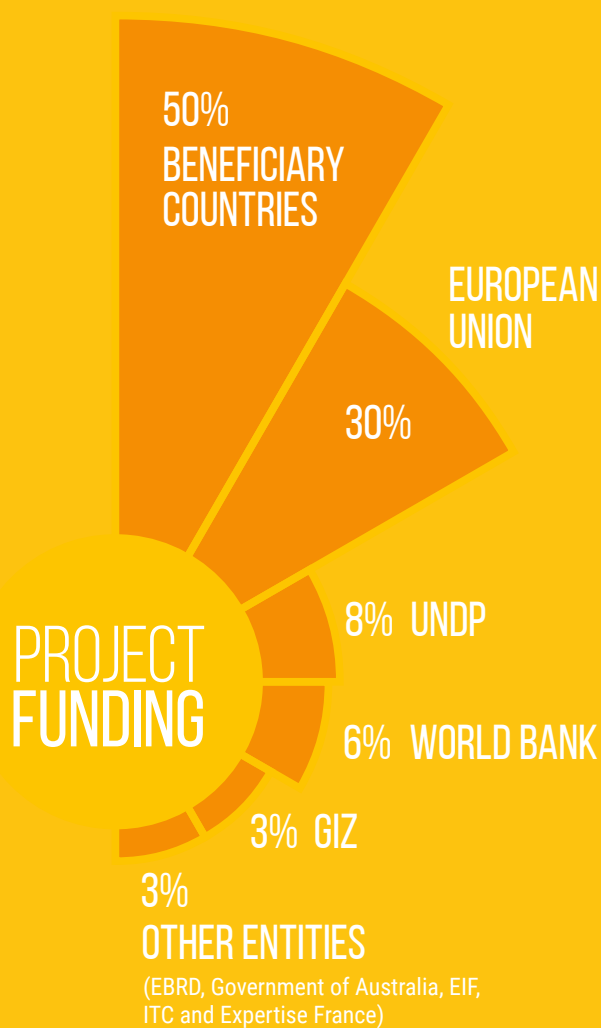
In comparison with 2020, expenditures increased by 8.9% from \$16.9 million (2019: \$20.9 million; 2018: \$20.4 million; 2017: \$19 million). This increase is due to staffing and consulting services expenses (9% increase from approx. \$13.1 million in 2020 to \$14.3 million in 2021). Since 2017, total costs for staff and consultants have steadily increased (2017: \$11.3 million; 2018: \$11.6 million; 2019: \$12.8 million). This illustrates the Programme's growth in size and expertise, in terms of human resources, over recent years. It also highlights the fact that the Programme has extended its technical assistance from purely customs automation to trade facilitation by developing new systems and modules such as ASYPM, ASYREC, electronic single windows, and eCITES, for example.

Although expenditures increased from 2020 to 2021, they decreased by almost 12% compared to 2019. This was due to a 90% reduction in travel expenses from \$3.2 million in 2019 to \$322,000 in 2021, caused by pandemic enforced travel restrictions.



**ASYCUDA**

EXPENDITURES EVOLUTION, IN MILLION \$



## 4

# ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS

## a. Iraq, Automation and Modernization of Customs

A significant highlight for the Programme was the signing of a technical cooperation project with Iraq for the automation and modernization of customs and the electronic clearance of goods by national trade stakeholders.

### Context

In 2020, the Iraqi government decided to press forward with an e-government initiative covering the automation of procedures – involving all state institutions



but especially those working in customs and tax collection. The programme includes the development of an automated system for collecting customs duties and taxes; consistent and effective application of customs tariffs and regulations; adoption of modern technology in state institutions and; fighting of corruption and illegal trafficking.

Aware of UNCTAD and the ASYCUDA Programme's reputation in the Middle East and around the world, the Iraqi government officially requested a proposal of technical cooperation and assistance. Following consultations between the ASYCUDA Programme, Iraqi customs and members of the Government of Iraq, a 7-year long project of automation and modernization of customs in 3 phases was drafted.

## Project Proposal

The first phase, predicted to last 30 months, includes the automation of the customs clearance process via the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld. The ASYCUDA Programme will also help simplify customs procedures, so as to minimize administrative costs to the business community and the Iraqi government. More broadly, phase one will increase customs revenues by ensuring that all goods are declared; duties and taxes are collected correctly and registered across all customs sites, and; duties, exemptions and preference regimes are correctly applied and managed. Furthermore, as a by-product of the customs clearance process, it will enable the collection of reliable and timely trade and fiscal statistics to assist in the economic planning process.

During the 24 month-long second phase, customs control processes will be automated and harmonized, with the system assigning customs officers their control tasks. Modern control methods (pre-arrival risk analysis, automatic valuation control, post-clearance audit, authorized economic operators programme) will be introduced. Electronic data exchange with PGAs and other customs agencies will be installed. By the end of phase two, a fully paperless customs administration will be in place.

Finally, the two-year long third phase will deliver an electronic single window (eSW) for trade, based on ASYCUDA technology. Article 10 (4) of the Bali Ministerial decision on the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) requests WTO members to establish a single window system that enables traders to submit required information and receive results in a timely manner through a single entry point connecting the participating authorities or agencies. The eSW will allow traders to process the paperwork needed to obtain certificate, permits or licenses online, as opposed to having to physically visit multiple government departments, as is currently the case.

As with all UNCTAD technical cooperation projects, sustainability and ownership are the cornerstones of a project's success. Consequently, much attention is paid to training as well as sharing knowledge and experience with national staff so that they can maintain and enhance their systems post-launch. This is ensured through the delivery of several technical and functional workshops, seminars and trainings. In addition, all hardware, software, trade data and statistics will exclusively belong to the government, prohibiting access to unauthorized entity.

## Signing the Agreement

On 27 May 2021, Ms. Isabelle Durant, UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General until 1 July 2022, and Mr. Ali Abdul Ameer Allawi, Iraq's Finance Minister, formally signed the deal to implement the project that will promote trade and development in Iraq. Due to COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions, the event was held virtually. Ms. Durant outlined her belief that the project will likely lead to increased customs revenues for Iraq and shorten the release time for goods at the border by half. Minister Allawi stressed the fact that the system would dramatically improve the operations of the Iraqi customs authority and help reduce or eliminate many of the problems the country faces when engaging in international trade.



“

*We selected ASYCUDA after a rigorous selection process because the system has been implemented in nearly 100 countries and shown excellent results in all aspects of customs management and procedures [...] Of course, the opportunities for corruption, extortion and malfeasance will also be radically reduced.”*



© Kenneth C. Zirkel

**Mr. Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi** Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister

## b. EU PRISE: Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade



Under the ASYCUDA / EU-funded Pacific Regional Integration Support (PRISE) project, signed in September 2021, ASYCUDAWorld is being implemented in seven Pacific Island countries – Cook Islands, Federation of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tonga.

## Context

In January 2020, a financing agreement under the 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) for the broader PRISE Programme was signed. It benefits 15 Pacific Islands countries, namely Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The PRISE Programme has six main outputs that include the enhancement of trade facilitation and customs procedures; improvement of sanitary and phytosanitary services; strengthening of capacity for regional aid-for-trade projects; support of measures to strengthen the business enabling environment and investment climate; improvement of the climate-smart business support services, and; strengthening of competitiveness of sustainable agricultural value-chains in the Pacific. The implementing partners are the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Pacific Community (SPC) and UNCTAD, with the latter managing and implementing the first output under the title Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT).

Trade integration and improvements in trade competitiveness are critical in a small-sized region that faces distance from markets, expensive maritime and air transport links, a reliance on imports, poor trade facilitation and border control, a vulnerability to disasters and shocks, expensive trade costs and capacity constraints in government departments.

## IMPACT Project

The overall objective of the IMPACT project is to boost and increase intra-regional and international trade by improving trade facilitation and customs procedures.

The first activities aim at improving the countries' ability to benefit from WTO priority measures. A gap analysis of customs procedures and regulatory framework, compared to the WTO TFA and free trade agreement measures, will be carried out. Legal revisions will be undertaken in each country to align with WTO trade facilitation priority measures. Business process re-engineering for WTO TFA will be conducted in the areas of risk management; post-clearance audit; authorized economic operators; and expedited shipment. All trade information will be made available and published through newly created trade portals.

Secondly, the IMPACT project will harmonize customs operations across all countries, including by improving electronic data interchange between traders and customs – leading to greater speed and efficiency in port handling and generating trade data. This phase will also cover the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld in the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau (the only states not implementing ASYCUDAWorld at the time of agreement); electronic exchange of trade data, and; deployment of a cloud-based ASYCUDAWorld production environment at the ASYCUDA Regional Office for the Pacific in Suva, Fiji.

Finally, the project aims to define the requirements for building electronic single window systems, with the identification of PGAs; assessment of legislations, procedures and IT infrastructure; documentation of electronic single window system requirements, tailored to each country, and; harmonization of border agencies risk management processes.

All these activities incorporate capacity building and the ASYCUDA Programme plans to develop institutional capacity through the organization and delivery of trainings and workshops.

## Signing the Agreement

UNCTAD and the European Union launched the project, virtually, on 24 September 2021.



“

***The IMPACT project is a key part of the Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme funded by the EU to facilitate and develop trade in the region and open new recovery paths from the negative socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 [...] In partnership with UNCTAD, the IMPACT project will thus contribute to sustainable and inclusive prosperity in the region, which is the first area of focus of the new EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.”***



**Mr. Sujiro Seam**  
Ambassador of the EU for the Pacific

## c. Barbados Single Window Agreement – UNCTAD15



UNCTAD's quadrennial ministerial conference is the organization's highest decision-making body, bringing together government representatives from each of UNCTAD's 195 member States. UNCTAD15<sup>7</sup> followed a hybrid model, with in-person and virtual participation, and took place in October 2021, hosted by Barbados under the theme From inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all. Debates and events dealt with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and societies; scaling up financing for development; and regional integration. The two main conference outputs were the political declaration, The Spirit of Speightstown,<sup>8</sup> and the overall conference outcome document, The Bridgetown Covenant, which will guide UNCTAD's work in the coming years.

Barbados has been using ASYCUDAWorld since 2019 and it has successfully reduced trade transaction costs and clearance times, increased customs revenues, and provides accurate and timely international trade statistics. Indeed, in 2020, over 60% of commercial imports were cleared within 24 hours of duties being paid.

The Government of Barbados recognized the benefits of customs automation and wanted to do more to streamline processes and procedures, better use resources, further facilitate cross-border trade, and increase transparency across all government departments. Consequently, during UNCTAD15, Barbados Minister of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Mr. Kerrie Symmonds, and UNCTAD Secretary-General, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, signed a project agreement for the building of an electronic single window system, using ASYCUDA technology.

<sup>7</sup> <https://unctad15.org/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/td541add1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/td541add1_en.pdf)

The electronic single window (eSW) brings together 28 government agencies and will make it easier for traders importing and exporting goods to comply with the requirements of Barbados customs and other PGAs using an electronic one-stop-shop.

The project will also review trade legislation and business process; provide data harmonization for all participating agencies; train staff and end-users; provide the necessary software development, testing and piloting; as well as deploy and troubleshoot the eSW itself.



“

***UNCTAD recognizes the achievements of Barbados in promoting its private sector and facilitating trade at the regional and international levels. UNCTAD is proud to support Barbados in increasing the country's overall competitiveness through the creation of an electronic single window.”***

**Ms. Rebeca Grynspan**  
UNCTAD Secretary-General

“

***We in Barbados feel that this is critical for our ease of doing business. This is critical for our competitiveness. This is critical for our business facilitation efforts [...] Effectively what we're now doing is having one platform, which will be a seamless place. One stop for the businessperson, whether micro, medium or large. That one stop allows for all of those government departments to interface with each other – online and real time.”***



**Mr. Kerrie Symmonds**  
Barbados Minister of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship

## d. Timor-Leste Launches Single Window for Trade

Timor-Leste successfully deployed ASYCUDAWorld in 2020. Following this, the government requested the Programme's assistance with building its own electronic trade single window system with the aim of increasing efficiency in the customs clearance process; further improving regulatory and revenue control; and reducing the administrative burden on the trading community by integrating eight PGAs and setting up an electronic exchange of data with Indonesia to facilitate cross-border trade.



In February 2021, the first module of the electronic single window was released. Developed and implemented in cooperation with TradeInvest – a government public institute responsible for investment and export promotion – the module grants investment certificates and manages the list of exempted commodities. In September 2021, the second eSW module which helps the government with monitoring and controlling the importation of ozone depleting substances was launched. Timor-Leste is the first ASYCUDA-user country to implement this module. A third eSW module was implemented for the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry to manage and control commercial vehicle permit granting and car dealer registration. In October 2021, the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste officially launched the ASYCUDA-based electronic trade single window.



*The launch of this Ozone Depleting Substances module under the single window system will certainly strengthen further the MRVE in Timor-Leste. The MRVE [Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Enforcement mechanism under the Montreal Protocol] implies that an operationalized licensing system should cover not only license to import or export but also ensure efficient monitoring and reporting systems to ensure accurate trade data."*

**Ms. Dechen Tsering**  
UNEP Regional Office for Asia-Pacific

“

*Since the restoration of independence, 20 years ago, Timor-Leste and UNCTAD have built a strong and trusted partnership, establishing a modern customs administration to encourage trade and grow our economy [...]*

*The implementation of a national trade single window, powered by ASYCUDA, is the next step in this evolution, as our needs and technology have developed [...]*

*It is easy to envisage how the single window implementation can offer Timor-Leste's population better opportunities to export our local products to the international market, but equally encourages investment in our country.*

*This in return generates growth for our businesses and creates jobs for women and other under-employed sections of our population, improving the quality of life for the people of Timor-Leste.”*



**Mr. Taur Matan Ruak**  
Prime Minister of Timor-Leste

Further, in December 2021, the Commissioner of Customs met with UNCTAD to discuss ways to further develop cooperation, sowing the seeds for increasing Timor-Leste's cooperation with UNCTAD and the ASYCUDA Programme.

## e. Kiribati and Tuvalu: Pioneering ASYCUDAWorld in SIDS



With the bigger economies in the Pacific (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu) adopting ASYCUDAWorld, in 2017 the Programme conducted a proof-of-concept study in Kiribati to design a specific approach for the deployment of ASYCUDAWorld in SIDS and smaller customs administrations. The study outcome was that ASYCUDAWorld is a good fit for all customs administrations, irrespective of their size or location.

In 2019, UNCTAD and six Pacific SIDS signed a project for The Implementation of the Pacific Trade and Customs Harmonization. It is part of the technical assistance extended to the signatory countries of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relation (PACER Plus) trade agreement and is funded by the Australian and New Zealand governments. It aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of customs clearance processes and will enable the deployment of ASYCUDAWorld in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tonga, and Tuvalu. Prior to the project, customs paperwork was processed manually on the islands which was time-consuming and required traders to travel to import and export clearing points to physically present documents. The project also intends that the automation and simplification of procedures will boost government revenue by ensuring that all goods are declared and the correct duties, taxes and regulations applied uniformly and consistently.

Due to COVID-19 enforced travel restrictions, ASYCUDA Programme experts were unable to travel to beneficiary countries, thus national project teams played an essential and critical role in implementing planned project activities, with remote support provided by Programme experts. Regular online meetings and trainings were carried out virtually. Two joint functional trainings were delivered to national project team members and they, in turn, trained their respective stakeholders. A total of 400 stakeholders from the region were trained on using ASYCUDAWorld in 2021.

In December 2021, on the first anniversary of the PACER Plus agreement coming into force, the project reached two important milestones with Kiribati and Tuvalu deploying ASYCUDAWorld. The official launch event was attended by His Excellency, Mr. Robin McKenzie, Australia's High Commissioner to Tuvalu.

“

*We are excited by the potential of ASYCUDAWorld to increase our ability to import and export goods [...] We will now be able to pre-clear goods being shipped to us for import while they are in transit, meaning businesses get their consignments in a more time efficient manner, while allowing the government to collect the correct revenues online.”*



**Mr. Tuilagi Teii**

Tuvalu's national ASYCUDAWorld project manager

“

*Since ASYCUDAWorld is online and paperless, businesses wanting to import goods into our country can clear their consignments with the multiple regulatory agencies in one go using the system [...] This saves a physical commute to different government departments before goods can be released, which is good for our importers and the environment.”*



**Mr. Tekaie Ititaake**

Kiribati's national project manager

“

*We are pleased to partner with the smaller Pacific PACER Plus signatories to support the ASYCUDAWorld roll-out as part of our Aid for Trade commitment to the Pacific region under the PACER Plus agreement [...] Customs-related reform and modernizing customs management systems play an important role in reducing border-related trading costs and providing enhanced customs capacity, which will support long-term economic integration across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.”*



**Mr. Keawe Woodmore**

New Zealand's PACER Plus senior official

## f. ASYCUDA Regional Transit Tool in ECOWAS



The regional road transit solution, implemented in 2019, allows for the exchange of transit information among the customs clearance systems. The solution was deployed in 3 corridors, Abidjan-Ouagadougou, Lomé-Ouagadougou and Cotonou-Niamey.<sup>9</sup> In 2021, the solution was extended to a 4<sup>th</sup> corridor, Ouagadougou-Niamey.

In cooperation with Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire customs administrations, and the rail transport company, SITARIAIL, the ASYCUDA Programme implemented a tool for the automatic exchange of rail transit data. The solution facilitates international rail trade; prevents and detects fraud; and helps increase customs revenue. The rail transport interfaces and messages were developed and integrated into the ASYCUDAWorld transit modules for each country. The Programme also assisted both customs administrations during the test and validation phases.

The rail module was launched in June 2021 at an official ceremony organized by Côte d'Ivoire Customs Commissioner in Abidjan. Since then, UNCTAD's ASYCUDA Programme has provided ongoing technical support to Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire customs.

“

***The project allows for a better traceability and a dematerialized tracking of transit procedures. The implementation of the tool is a step forward towards trade facilitation and regional customs cooperation.”***



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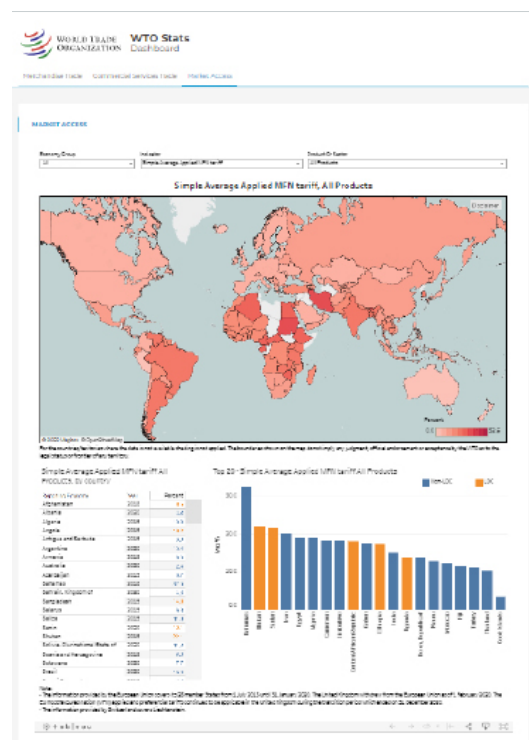
**General Pierre Alphonse**  
Côte d'Ivoire Customs Commissioner

<sup>9</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasyCUDA2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasyCUDA2021d2_en.pdf), page 45

## g. Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar: Piloting ASYADN



ASYCUDA's Automatic Data Notification tool (ASYADN) consists of a software module that facilitates the compilation of trade statistics via the extraction of trade and customs related data for the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Integrated Database (IDB).<sup>10</sup> After the development of the tool in 2020, MOUs were signed between the WTO and both Madagascar and Cote d'Ivoire for the implementation of ASYADN in 2021. Consequently, the ASYCUDA Programme successfully deployed the solution in the two countries, in cooperation with the WTO.



## h. Zambia: Extending ASYATO Implementation



ASYATO is the ASYCUDA extraction tool for the African Trade Observatory developed in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC). Following the successful deployment of the ASYATO tool in Comoros, Madagascar and Uganda in 2021,<sup>11</sup> the solution was implemented in Zambia in 2021.

Additionally, the solution was adapted to a Microsoft environment, including testing it on various databases. Following this, Seychelles and the ITC signed an MOU for the tool's deployment. A tripartite kick-off meeting was held in November 2021 where it was agreed to start the implementation of the solution in the country during January 2022.

<sup>10</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlascuda2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlascuda2021d2_en.pdf), page 40

<sup>11</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlascuda2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlascuda2021d2_en.pdf), page 40

## i. Cambodia and Sri Lanka: ASYHUB



**Digitizing  
Global Maritime  
Trade Actors**



**TRADE  
LENS**



The ASYHUB module facilitates communication between ASYCUDAWorld and shipping data providers' ICT systems. It was developed as part of the GiZ led project, Digitizing Global Maritime Trade (DGMT). It enables ship data providers to re-use existing data to complete entry/exit formalities and exchange advanced electronic cargo information with port authorities, customs, and other border agencies. It improves the efficiency of customs clearance and risk management systems by facilitating pre-arrival processing of sea cargo manifests.<sup>12</sup> Cargo information is usually submitted to customs only 24 hours before arrival, although it is logged many weeks in advance, leaving customs administrations little time for risk assessment and processing, and increasing customs clearance times for economic operators.



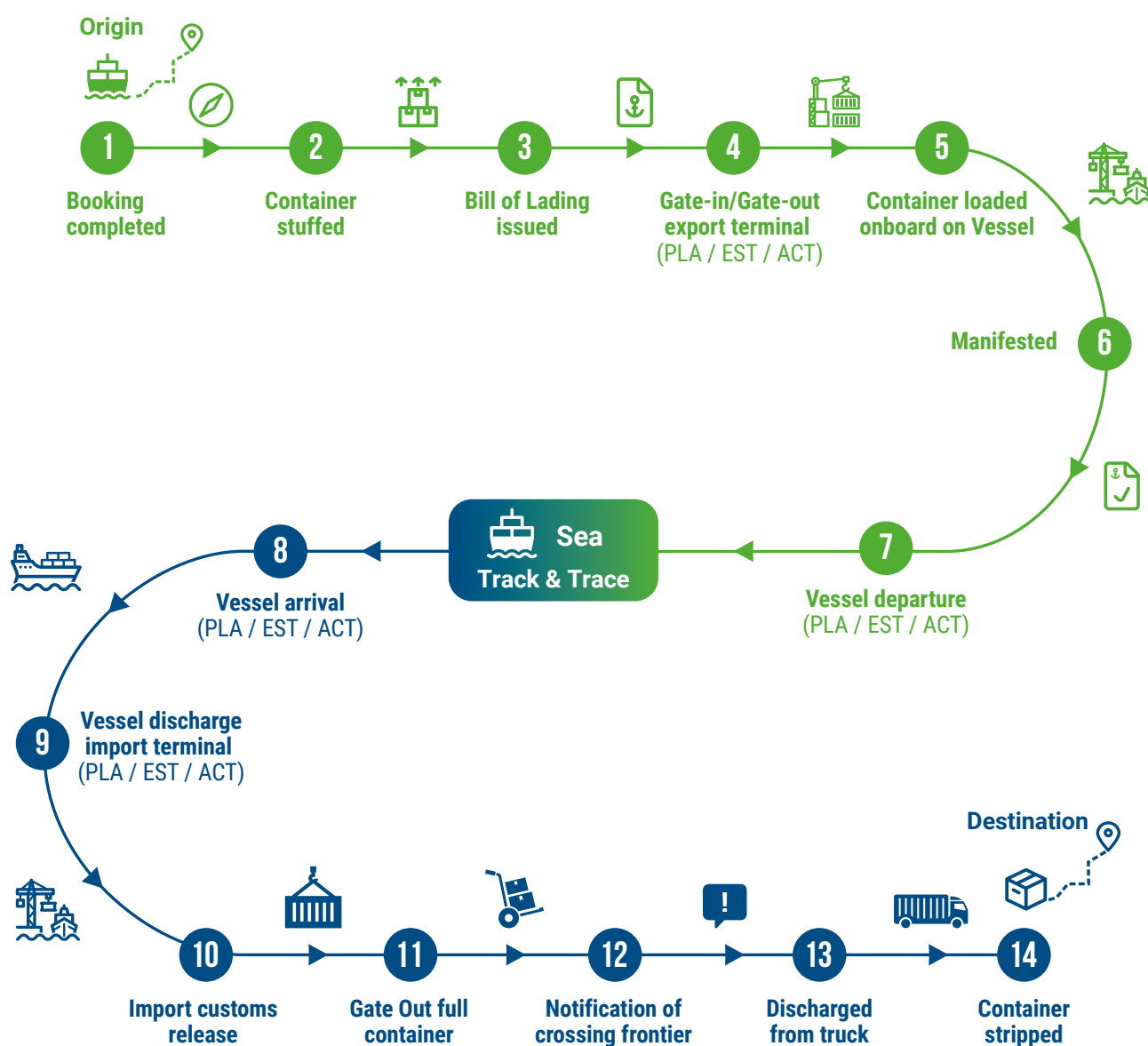
Following the development of ASYHUB in 2020, the project moved to the deployment and testing phase, with the solution being piloted in two countries, namely Cambodia and Sri Lanka. 2021/22 saw significant progress made on ASYHUB, with the module being fine-tuned and customized for each country – for example, a feature allowing companies to automatically exchange data information and a vessel's registration was developed for Sri Lanka. Data is now securely exchanged between TradeLens (a privately owned platform for sharing and streamlining shipping information), and ASYCUDAWorld through ASYHUB in each of the two piloting countries. Several and regular conference calls, presentations and demonstrations of a technical and functional nature between all actors involved in the project contributed to progress and improved awareness of customs administrations and private sector. To increase awareness of the project's work, an educational event was held in late June 2021.

<sup>12</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasyudainf2021d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasyudainf2021d1_en.pdf), page 11

## ASY HUB Data Structure

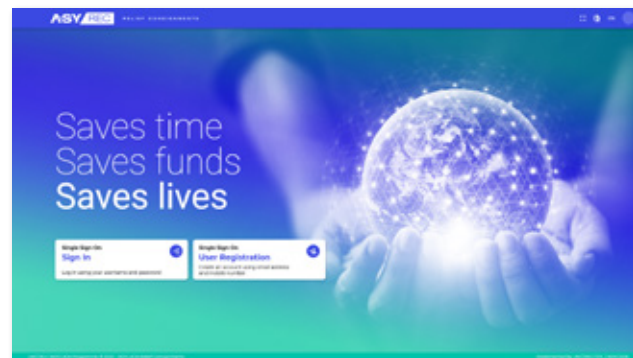


## ASY HUB Event Flow



## j. UN-wide Project on Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics

The United Nations Development Account (UNDA) is a capacity development programme of the United Nations Secretariat aimed at enhancing capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations development agenda. Since 2020 and throughout 2021, under the UNDA project on transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics, the ASYCUDA Programme has assisted user countries in tackling the impact of COVID-19.



Following the publication of guidelines for customs administrations to adapt their use of ASYCUDAWorld to the COVID-19 situation<sup>13</sup> and the submission of a survey for customs administrations<sup>14</sup> to facilitate the implementation of UNCTAD guidelines in 2020, ASYCUDA published, in 2021, a report that analyzes the data collected from 46 user countries.<sup>15</sup>

As part of the UNDA project, the Programme redesigned and enhanced the Automated System for Relief Consignments (ASYREC), developed in cooperation with OCHA. ASYREC facilitates the smooth and efficient coordination of humanitarian relief imports. It ensures that the humanitarian response to an emergency crisis proves logistically timely and effective. ASYREC has enabled the prioritization and clearance of consignments containing medicines and medical equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, ASYREC can now be delivered as Software as a Service (SaaS), using cloud computing. It is configurable to allow its implementation in any member State, independent of the operational customs IT system, as an online system or as a standalone system when a customs' IT system is not operational.<sup>16</sup>

The Programme has continued mobilizing efforts to offer quality training materials to its systems' users around the world through the implementation of an e-learning platform. Since 2020, virtual training and e-learning have become the cornerstone of capacity-building. In 2021, the platform was populated with new high-quality video tutorials, documentation and exercises for ASYREC and eCITES. By the end of 2021, the platform was used by 100+ users from around the world. The number of users is expected to grow significantly in 2022 as the requests for new e-learning accounts is increasing.



<sup>13</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycudainf2020d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycudainf2020d1_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycuda2021d2_en.pdf), page 56

<sup>15</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycudainf2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycudainf2021d2_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.asyrec.asycuda.org/>

## k. Enhancement of ASYCUDA Systems Around the World

2021 saw many user countries enhance or upgrade their ASYCUDA systems.

Barbados, Cambodia, Gambia, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova and Saint Lucia upgraded to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld.

Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu piloted the electronic manifest submission and processing in ASYCUDA.

Guinea Customs, in cooperation with ASYCUDA and Expertise France, implemented dashboards for monitoring the efficiency of selectivity criteria and to keep track of infractions.

Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uganda and Vanuatu deployed new, tailored modules to enhance their ASYCUDA-based single window systems. For instance, in Burundi, the ASYCUDA-based single window was enhanced to align with new regulations implemented at the Ministry of Health and at the Ministry of Agriculture. In Kazakhstan, the system was enhanced with an improved and tailored version of the payment and guarantee management module, to allow for the better handling of guarantees and management of deferred payments.

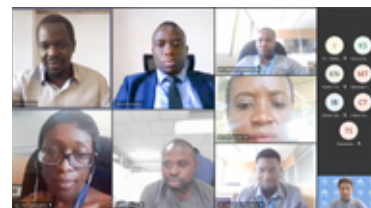
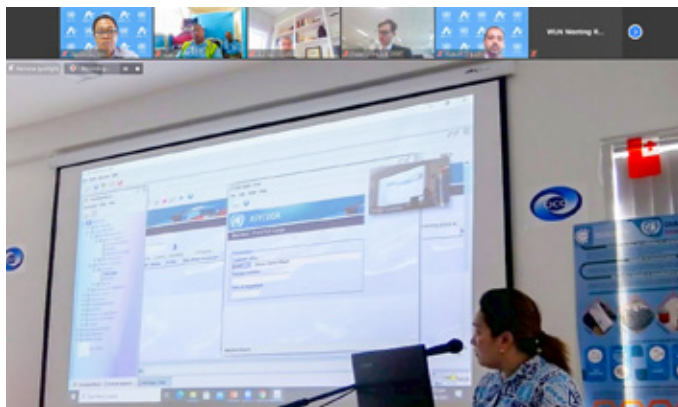


In Uganda, additional modules were deployed under the ASYCUDA single transaction portal, so that the system now includes the Dairy Development Authority; Pre-export verification of conformity for Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS); Uganda Free Zones Authority (UFZA); as well as the exemptions management module used by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Uganda Revenue Authority and the Ministry of Finance.

In Moldova, the ASYCUDA Programme analyzed the operational environment and customs procedures used for the submission and processing of electronic manifest express consignments, and accordingly customized the country's ASYCUDAWorld's pre-arrival processing module.

Nepal Customs Administration piloted e-payment through ASYCUDAWorld at Dryport Customs.

## I. Capacity Building



In addition to improving the ASYCUDA e-learning platform as mentioned in section 4.j, the Programme also organized and delivered specific trainings.

The Gambia Revenue Authority successfully completed a training on the installation and configuration of ASYCUDAWorld and the building of the prototype, to mobilize revenue and facilitate business procedures.

Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe customs IT officers participated in a 3-week, virtual technical training to better configure and tailor ASYCUDAWorld to their needs and requirements.

In Uganda, 90 classroom training sessions for a total of 546 participants were organized by the Uganda Revenue Authority and the Programme.

400+ Pacific Islands customs officers and economic operators were trained on the use, configuration and adaptation of ASYCUDAWorld to regional and national requirements and regulations.

5

# IMPACT

ASYCUDA is a result-driven programme. The implementation of its systems has a measurable, direct, and positive impact upon economies in both the short and long-term. The technical assistance provided to governments has enabled them to grow their economies; increase public revenues and transparency; and reduce the time and cost of international trade.

Most statistics below are taken from the ASYCUDA Compendium of case studies published in 2022 under the title Digital Interconnectivity for Inclusive Trade.<sup>17</sup>



**Bangladesh**



**in customs revenue**  
from 2017 to 2021



**Bosnia and Herzegovina**



**in value of import**  
transactions in 2020-2021



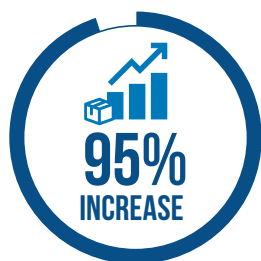
**Burundi**

**71%**  
**of medical imports**  
were processed in  
less than 24 hours

<sup>17</sup> <https://unctad.org/webflyer/asycuda-compendium-2022>



### Djibouti



**in customs revenue**  
from 2012 to 2021



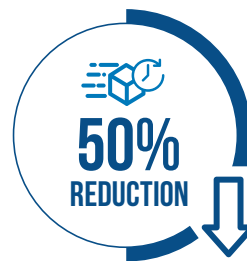
### Dominica



**commercial imports cleared**  
within 24 hours in 2021



### Gambia



**in average release times**  
between 2017 and 2021



### Papua New Guinea

**Customs processing**  
time reduced from  
**7 Days** **to** **2 Hours**



### Togo<sup>18</sup>



**in customs revenue**  
in 2020-2021



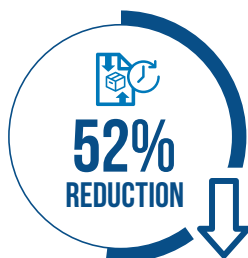
### Tonga



**in value of import**  
transactions from 2020-2021



### Trinidad and Tobago



**in average customs declaration**  
processing time from 2019 to 2021



### Turkmenistan



**Declarations processed**  
on average daily in 2021



### Uganda



**Certificates** of origin processed in  
**ASYCUDA** based Uganda  
Electronic Single Window in 2021

<sup>18</sup> <https://bit.ly/35C831n> and <https://bit.ly/3HmtT7j>

## 6

## OUTREACH

In recent years, the ASYCUDA Programme has strengthened and improved its communication and outreach activities through a redesigned website that is updated with new content; building a strong presence in social media and; the publication of newsletters and articles.

## a. Website

In 2021, the ASYCUDA Programme's official website<sup>19</sup> was regularly updated with news, publications and the latest information on ASYCUDA systems. The homepage shows the latest news and events and the user countries page now includes an advanced search bar that can filter the list of ASYCUDA user countries by name, operating system, database management system, operational system version and/or additional ASYCUDA systems and products implemented (e.g., ASYPM, IATA, SW, UPU).



<sup>19</sup> [www.asycuda.org](http://www.asycuda.org)

In 2021, the website was visited by 83'525 users, compared to 64'635 in 2020, which represents a 28% increase. Visits took place during a total of 122'724 sessions, compared to 95'651 in 2020, which is also a 28% increase. When comparing 2021 year-on-year with 2020, the continents with the greatest increase in users are Asia (+41%), the Americas (+26%) and Africa (+25%). The average session duration in 2021 was 1 minute and 55 seconds with an average of 2.34 pages visited per session. This is a decrease from 2 minutes and 12 seconds and 2.5 pages respectively in 2020, potentially due to the improved organization of web content, making it easier to find the information being searched for.

 Users  
**83,525**

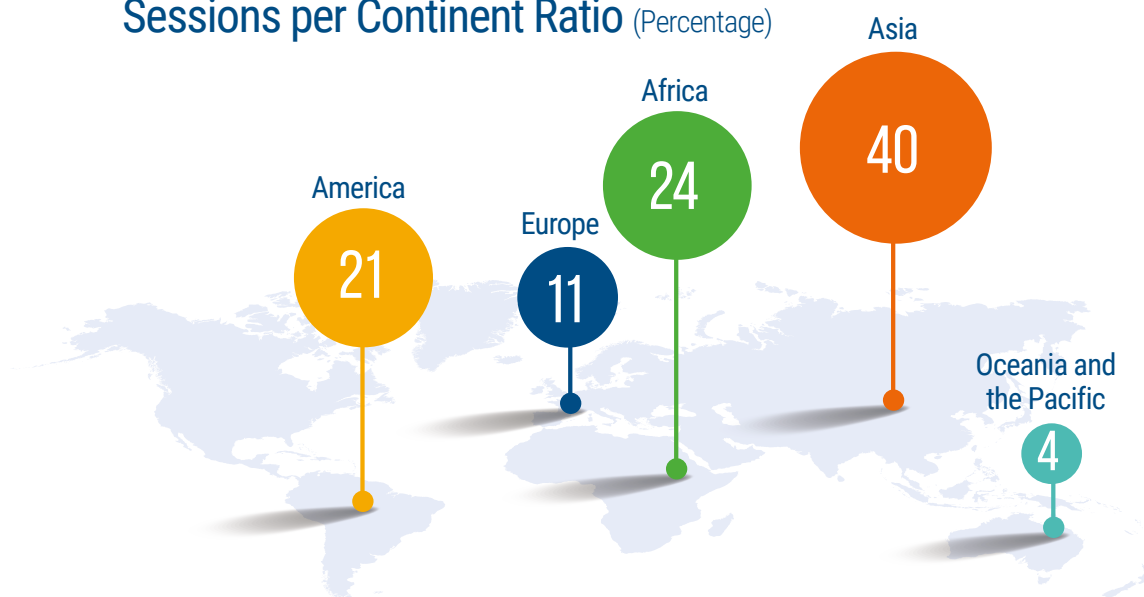
 **+28%**  
Increase in  
**2021**

 Total visits  
**122,724**

The top five most visited pages of the site are the homepage (English); software description page (English), user countries page (English), homepage (Arabic) and; About page (English). The French homepage is the 7th most visited page of the website.

Approximately 55% of website sessions originated from Google searches, 17% used the website address directly, 10% came to the site from user countries websites and portals, 3% from Bing searches and 1% from Baidu searches.

## Sessions per Continent Ratio (Percentage)



## b. Social Media

The number of new followers of the ASYCUDA official twitter account for 2021 is 661, making a total of 2'118 followers and equating to a 45% increase. The official twitter account profile was visited 17'192 times in 2021.



Further, ASYCUDA increased its social media presence by launching its official LinkedIn account in October 2021.

The YouTube accounts<sup>20</sup> were populated with new videos produced by the Programme and user countries. By end-2021, the channels totalled approximately 600 followers (73% increase year-on-year) and the videos around 22'000 views (70% increase year-on-year). Some videos are part of the e-learning platform and are therefore only accessible to e-learning platform users. Other videos are promotional and public, sharing user countries experiences of implementing ASYCUDA systems.



## c. Publications

In 2021, the ASYCUDA Programme published numerous papers and articles, and a newsletter.<sup>21</sup> The newsletter<sup>22</sup> covered how ASYCUDA capitalized upon travel restrictions to further enhance its systems and develop new ways to serve the global trading community.



<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM4mFeppttnYUBPzMNuWFAQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkQmwywKDFfksAOgF8LXTg>

<sup>21</sup> <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/customs-automation-ASYCUDA>

<sup>22</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycludainf2021d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlasycludainf2021d1_en.pdf)



# 7 WAY FORWARD

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and settle in a new normal we need to acknowledge UNCTAD and its ASYCUDA Programme operational resilience. The Programme's demand-driven nature necessitates regular review and fine-tuning of its support and delivery to member States in order to reflect changes in circumstances or user requirements, thus ensuring client satisfaction. Accordingly, COVID-19 enforced travel restrictions, led to the strengthening of its remote technical support to user-countries for the implementation and enhancement of ASYCUDA and other systems.



Other demands from UNCTAD's membership aim at improving coordination and integration between the respective workflows of all international trade actors, and the ASYCUDA Programme responds to these continuously evolving challenges. For instance, the global trading community and customs administrations need better preparation and coordination for emergency intervention to tackle the adverse effects of climate change and future disasters (such as pandemics, tsunamis and wildfires), and avoid the disruption of supply chains. UNCTAD used its 40 years' experience in automation of harmonized, transparent and coordinated procedures, to reduce paperwork and physical contacts with the view to facilitating movement of humanitarian relief. This materialized in 2021/22 through a UN-wide, UNDA sponsored project that led to the development of the Automated System for Relief Consignments (ASYREC), and its subsequent piloting in Vanuatu.

The UNCTAD ASYCUDA Programme further addressed demands from member States by developing automated procedures and tools for the monitoring of trade in polluting substances, and the control of international trade in endangered species. Following the successful piloting of eCITES in Sri Lanka in 2020 and in Mozambique in 2022, ASYCUDA is enhancing eCITES to integrate the Electronic Permit Information eXchange (EPIX) for the electronic exchange of CITES permits and certificates among management authorities of different countries. The eCITES CoP 19, to be held in November 2022, will be a timely and unique opportunity for UNCTAD to showcase the result of its successful collaboration with the CITES Secretariat for the benefits of the parties to the CITES Convention.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased awareness and urgency among governments regarding the need for increased digitization of interactions and operations in trade and logistics, and interconnection between government agencies and with industry. Harmonized trade data needs to be exchanged electronically for faster, cheaper and more efficient processing and monitoring of trade transactions. User countries need a framework for the development of interfaces that allow ASYCUDA and other systems to exchange trade and logistics data. Using the latest technology and its expertise, the ASYCUDA Programme has partnered with GiZ and the shipping industry to develop and pilot ASYHUB Maritime, an open, standardized platform for pre-arrival and pre-departure processing and the integration of data between ASYCUDA and third-party systems.

The ASYCUDA Programme continues to explore new open-source technologies and approaches and their potential to facilitate cross-border trade. Current customs clearance systems are centered on customs procedures and formalities that define the required data, and are directly derived from a paper-based approach. The new approach considered and developed by UNCTAD for new software developments is based on the logistical flow of goods and focuses on consignments. In this new paradigm, data is attached to goods moving across borders using one or more mode(s) of transport. Merchandise and transport data is conveyed in advance and validated at a relevant time to facilitate sharing and reuse, and then associated to customs formalities. Accurate, specific, merchandise data and transaction supporting documents are provided by the trader at the country of departure, with the transporter only being responsible for providing data related to transport and movement. Tracing the goods from the country of departure allows for better accuracy of data, enhanced analysis, transparency and intervention. This approach is promoted by WCO as it includes the Unique Consignment Reference in datasets and information exchanges.

Moving forward UNCTAD's ASYCUDA Programme shall continue to support the needs of the trading community through state-of-the-art processes and technology, and in line with the strong reaffirmation of its mandate by member States during UNCTAD15.





**ASYCUDA**

Automated System for Customs Data

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