

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE SEMINAR, 2020 FALL SERIES

### BREAKING NEW GROUND: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WTO AGREEMENT ON FACILITATION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Background**

As tariffs have continued to drop around the globe, attention shifted to the remaining trade barriers on the non-tariff side. Trade facilitation emerged as an increasingly high priority for business and policymakers alike. Seeking to expedite the movement of goods and to cut back on hampering red tape, facilitation reforms have become a key component of international trade policies. In times of globalized manufacturing and just-in-time delivery, they are crucial for improving the competitiveness of enterprises and for successfully integrating production into cross-border value chains.

Global efforts to advance trade facilitation gained momentum when the WTO launched negotiations on a new Agreement in 2004. They were brought to a successful conclusion at the WTO's Ninth Ministerial Conference in December of 2013. Following a subsequent ratification process, the Trade Facilitation Agreement entered into force in February 2017. While its full potential has yet to be reached, the Agreement already left a significant mark and lifted facilitation reforms to a new level. Its innovative approach to implementation set a new reference point for future multilateral trade agreements.

#### **Main aspects addressed**

##### **Part 1**

- Motivation, Mission, Mandate: Major milestones in creating the Trade Facilitation Agreement
- What's inside? Main features of the Agreement and underlying objectives

## Part 2

- What makes it stand out? Key reforms prescribed by the TFA and their impact
- New philosophies and novel approaches

## Part 3

- Where do we go from here? The path towards full implementation of the TFA
- Latest state-of-play and road ahead
- Implications of the current Covid19 crisis

## Lecturer

A trade lawyer with a specialisation in WTO affairs, Ms. Neufeld joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 to look after the expanding work on Trade Facilitation. As the Secretary of the TF Negotiating Group, she oversaw the multilateral negotiations in this area until their successful conclusion at the Bali Ministerial in 2013. She is now responsible for the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee, tasked to ensure the TF Agreement's efficient implementation.

Ms. Neufeld also engages in research and teaching activities - both for the WTO and for several universities. Before being with the WTO, Ms. Neufeld worked for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which she joined shortly after having completed her PhD. Her publications focus on international trade issues.

## Suggested Reading

- Agreement on Trade Facilitation, WT/L/931 (*does not need to be read cover to cover but will be used as a key reference document*).
- Moisé, Orliac, Minor, "Trade Facilitation Indicators – the Impact on Trade Costs", OECD Trade Policy Working Paper.
- Neufeld, "Implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement: From Vision to Reality", WTO Working Paper ERSD-2016-14.
- Neufeld, "The Long and Winding Road: How WTO Members finally reached a Trade Facilitation Agreement", WTO Working Paper ERSD-2014-06.
- WTO/ICC/Global Alliance for TF, "The Covid19 Crisis and Trade Facilitation", July 2020, <https://tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/tfacovidsurveyresults.pdf>