

Trade Facilitation Action Plan

Evaluation of Achievement of Concrete Goals 2000 - 2002

1. Introduction

The Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) was endorsed by the second ASEM Summit in April 1998. It aims, *inter alia*, at reducing non-tariff barriers, increasing transparency and promoting trade opportunities between the two regions while complementing and considering work being carried out in bilateral and multilateral fora.

The TFAP is not a forum for negotiations, but it contributes to the goal of promoting, facilitating and liberalising trade between Asia and Europe by providing a venue for exchange of views and work on the implementation of commonly agreed deliverables.

Implementation of TFAP is supervised by the Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI). In 2000 SOMTI provided Economic Ministers and the third ASEM summit with an evaluation of the achievement of the goals set for TFAP for the period 1998 – 2000.

Following the first round of evaluations SOMTI established deliverables for the period 2000 – 2002. The present report evaluates the achievement of these deliverables.

In parallel to the deliverables for TFAP priority areas SOMTI established a list of "Major Generic Trade Barriers".¹ ASEM partners report on their measures taken to address the generic trade barriers on a voluntary basis. In 2002 some ASEM partners have submitted updated reports to SOMTI, which are presented as separate documents and which - read in conjunction with the evaluation in the present report - complete the picture of ASEM activities to facilitate trade.

Facilitators of TFAP working groups will meet at the eve of SOMTI in Bali (15/16 July 2002) to discuss the experience made in the period 2000 – 2002 and future work in TFAP priority areas. The present report is intended to facilitate this task.

The present report could also serve as a basis for the discussion of facilitators, SOMTI and Economic Ministers about TFAP deliverables for the period 2002-2004.

2. General evaluation

There has been an significant number of meetings, seminars and exchange of documents in the TFAP priority areas during the reporting period. ASEM partners have dealt with most of the deliverables established for the reporting period.

¹ A complete list of 'Major Generic Trade Barriers' can be found on the web page http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asem/other_activities/tfap_goals_2000.htm

However, the level of activity varied significantly in different TFAP priority areas. In its reports about TFAP activity in the period 1998-2000, SOMTI stated ‘that ASEM partners should not hesitate in discontinuing activities if there is no interest in keeping a particular priority area’. Experience in the 2000-2002 shows that ASEM partners have followed SOMTI’s recommendation in this respect.

3. Deliverables in the Specific Priority Areas

When establishing the TFAP 1998 SOMTI defined initial goals for the individual TFAP priority areas. The initial goals are presented below as first item under the heading of each TFAP priority area.

Building on the initial goals and the evaluation of the period 1998-2000 SOMTI defined the specific deliverables for the period 2000-2002. The specific deliverables are presented below as second item under the heading of each TFAP priority area, followed by the evaluation of the period 2000 - 2002.

3.1. Customs procedures

3.1.1. Initial goals

In supporting the on-going co-operation between customs authorities, the TFAP will aim at promoting simplification, harmonisation and transparency in customs procedures. This should include inter alia:

- ◆ an accelerated alignment and harmonisation of tariff nomenclatures using WTO and WCO standards;
- ◆ an accelerated implementation of obligations with respect to customs valuation procedures;
- ◆ the promotion of standardised and simplified documentation, including, if possible, paperless systems;
- ◆ the promotion of transparency of customs regulations and procedures;
- ◆ the collection and dissemination of information on ASEM partners' respective rules of origin;
- ◆ where appropriate, the exploration of possible common positions of ASEM partners in WTO and WCO.

3.1.2. Specific deliverables 2000 - 20002

In supporting the ongoing cooperation between customs authorities through the meetings of the ASEM Directors-General and Commissioners of Customs, the ASEM process, and TFAP in particular, will continue to aim at promoting simplification, harmonisation, predictability, and transparency in customs procedures to facilitate trade, in particular for SMEs.

The deliverables were:

- accelerated alignment and harmonisation of tariff nomenclatures with WCO standards including implementation of HS 2002 version tariff nomenclature in all Customs Administrations;
- continue discussions on customs co-operation and mutual administrative assistance agreements between the European Union and interested Asian ASEM partners, with a view to starting negotiations
- promotion of transparency by improving and updating the ASEM Customs Database such as customs duties and nomenclature, tariff quotas, import and export procedures and formalities, rules of origin, customs legislation, etc., taking into account the recommendations by the Fourth Asia-Europe Business Forum(AEBF IV)
- following the success of the previous seminar, further seminars will be held for customs and business representatives, in close consultation with the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF), and including, for example, key issues such as risk analysis, EDI, paperless systems and speeding-up of the customs handling
- improvement of predictability for the business community through publication and clarification upon request of customs regulation and procedures in force, adoption of modern customs techniques, such as risk management, pre-arrival declaration, and post clearance audit, and encouragement of ratification of the revised Kyoto Convention by partners who have not yet done so
- improvement in consistency in interpretation of the rules
- promotion of standardised and simplified documentation taking into account the existing international standards including UN/EDIFACT and the ongoing discussions in various international fora, and launching a study in ASEM for harmonising elements on Customs Clearance Procedures based on the G7 data set
- provision of one stop shop services for cargo clearance procedures (Single Window), within each ASEM partner, where possible
- development of a Code of Conduct on Integrity by each partner, taking into account the diversity of ASEM partners
- formulation, where appropriate, of common positions of ASEM partners in WTO and WCO
- taking into account resources available, provide possible technical assistance and training programs related to customs simplified procedures that will contribute to ASEM expertise and experience.

3.1.3 Evaluation

The Working group has addressed the overwhelming majority of its goals.

On 1 January 2002, China, the EU, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand have applied the HS 2002 version to their tariff nomenclature, which improved and accelerated alignment and harmonisation of tariff nomenclatures within ASEM.

ASEAN countries have finalised the ASEAN Harmonised Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN) based on the HS 2002 version, which will be introduced into application from 1 July 2003.

Korea has concluded a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the EU; China continues discussions regarding conclusion of a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the EU; Japan, Malaysia and Singapore are studying the feasibility of concluding a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the EU.

Between 1994 and 1999, the Philippines implemented a Tax Computerization Project highlighted by the activation of UNJCTAD's ASYCUDA ++ system. It resulted in the computerization of the following end-to-end import processes: the manifest, lodgment, assessment of duties and taxes, risk assessment and selectivity, payment and on-line release. All these involve the processing of only a single administrative document (SAD). Advance processing of shipments is being done through a Super Green Lane (SGL) facility that allows automatic clearance of goods for pre-qualified firms, with cargo inspection being done at the company premises, if needed. A law has been passed on the activation of a Post Entry Audit system. Recent innovations to facilitate operations include mobile-phone based filing of import entries, billing and payment of import taxes and duties and tracking of cargo status in export processing zones likewise through the mobile phone text system.

Japan, the administrator of the ASEM Customs Procedures Database and Procedures Working Group Homepage², redesigned the whole websites to make them more user-friendly and uploaded new information, such as Chairman's statements at related ASEM meetings and upcoming events to further promote transparency.

The Second ASEM Seminar on Simplification and Harmonisation of Customs Procedures sponsored by the Asian Development Bank was successfully held in Bangkok, Thailand, in April 2001. The seminar enabled Customs administrations and the business sectors to deepen mutual understanding and to discuss Customs' role and possible ways to cooperate to promote trade facilitation.

Almost all partners improved predictability for the business community by publicising Customs regulations and procedures in local languages and English through various means, such as Customs Websites and publications, including official gazettes and brochures. China, the EU, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore have adopted risk management, pre-arrival declarations, and post-clearance audits. The Philippines has adopted risk management and post-clearance audits and is considering adopting the pre-arrival declaration. China and Japan have ratified the revised Kyoto Convention. Vietnam introduced the Law on Customs which also clearly regulates post-clearance audits.

Japan and Korea have established national centres for uniform application of tariff classification and Customs valuation. China has established laws and regulations department or divisions in both headquarters and local Customs for uniform application of Customs rules. The Philippines provides a system wherein questions on the interpretation of Customs rulings can be clarified by trade-related

² The web address of this homepage is <http://www.customs.go.jp/asem/asemcpdframe.htm>

parties. The EC has adopted a Community Customs Code as well as Implementing Provisions which allow uniform application of Customs rules and procedures.

Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand have introduced UN/EDIFACT standard.

Japan, Malaysia and Singapore are providing one-stop service for cargo clearance procedures that enables users to perform various government procedures at one terminal, which results in the reduction of a heavy burden on traders caused by the costs of the various administrative procedures. China has almost finished readying one-stop service. To further assist traders, Malaysia has implemented measures involving Direct Release System, extended working hours, Express Handling for immediate release of electronic processing and payment of customs duties. The Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) has been established since 1994 to facilitate electronic processing of trade documents and funds transfer for payment of customs duties utilising smart cards and security pin-pads. The Malaysian Customs has set up an active Customs-Private Sector Liaison Committee, which meets regularly to address problems faced by both parties.

All ASEM partners have developed a Code of Conduct on Integrity that is expected to enhance the level of integrity of Customs officials.

The 2nd Seminar agreed that ASEM Customs administrations would contribute to the discussion and have dialogues with the business community, on the WTO trade facilitation. The 6th meeting of the Customs Procedure Working Group shared views on the significance of launching negotiation regarding trade facilitation on the basis of the decision to be taken at the fifth WTO Ministerial Meeting.

EU, Japan and Korea have been providing technical assistance and training programs to ASEM Customs administrations of developing ASEM partners. China and Singapore are considering to provide training

Malaysia and the EC co-hosted the 'ASEM Seminar on Trade Facilitation Issues in the WTO' in Kuala Lumpur, 28-29 June 2001. The seminar was attended by 135 representatives from both the government and private sectors of ASEM partner countries. Among the issues discussed were:

- Experience of partner countries in modernisation of customs procedures, resulting in cost saving, reduced processing time and high productivity;
- Cost of automation in customs documents processing and capacity in handling automated computerised systems, and
- Technical assistance to developing countries.

3.2. Standards and Conformity Assessment

3.2.1. Initial goals

In supporting and enhancing the ongoing co-operation between standards, testing, certification and accreditation bodies, the TFAP will in particular aim at :

- ◆ enhancing the exchange of information among standards bodies and establishing national contact points as appropriate;
- ◆ promoting and facilitating the alignment of domestic standards of ASEM partners with international standards;
- ◆ promoting simplification and transparency in standards and certification information and procedures, drawing on electronic media where appropriate;
- ◆ where appropriate, exploring possible common positions amongst ASEM partners in relation to the work of international standards bodies (such as ISO and IEC);
- ◆ where appropriate, preparing for eventual progress towards mutual recognition agreements;
- ◆ encouraging co-operation in the promotion of technical and institutional capacity-building relating to standards, testing and certification.

3.2.2. Specific deliverables 2000 - 2002

In supporting and enhancing the ongoing co-operation between standards, testing, certification, and accreditation bodies, the deliverables were:

- continuing close consultation, where appropriate, in relation to the work of international bodies dealing with standards such as the ISO and the IEC and to the WTO TBT discussions;
- continue the improvement of mutual understanding of each other's systems of testing, accreditation and certification of conformity, and the development and dissemination of information materials on national standards, certification and accreditation procedures in SME friendly format;
- work on improving alignment of national with international standards. This will ensure that aligned national standards are embodied in national laws and regulations, and periodic reporting thereon, will concentrate on transparency of regulations and their implementation;
- co-operate, including information exchange, for acceleration of application of the agreed paper on best regulatory practices by ASEM partners;
- continue the group's consideration of MRA's and related issues;
- encourage and co-operate in the promotion of technical and institutional capacity-building in relation to standards, testing, certification, accreditation and technical regulations, including the exchange of information on existing programs, the identification of possible gaps, and the enhancement of these programs as appropriate, taking account where possible, of TFAP objectives such as improved alignment on international standards, best practices etc

3.2.3 Evaluation

The Working group has addressed the overwhelming majority of its goals.

ASEM partners have held seven meetings on standards and conformity assessment and continue to make substantial progress, in line with the goals and deliverables in the action plan.

The group provides an important forum to exchange information and experience and promote dialogue and mutual understanding regarding standardisation and conformity assessment policy.

A key emphasis has been placed on the exercise to improve alignment on international standards for a concrete set of priority sectors, including medical devices, machinery, electrical and rubber products. The choice of sectors reflects mutual trade interests, in sectors where there is a real chance of making progress and which will have a clear and positive impact on trade.

An inventory of standards and conformity assessment-related organisations has also been created and is updated at regular intervals.

The group has discussed best regulatory practices and developed specific guidelines (adopted during the 4th meeting in Bangkok in 2000). A questionnaire on best regulatory practice has been developed and several partners have provided responses to the questionnaire for the telecommunications and electrical safety sectors. The partners have held various discussions on MRAs and other aspects of regulatory co-operation and trade facilitation.

Another important deliverable is the agreement on guidelines for technical co-operation in relation to standards, testing, certification, accreditation and technical regulations (adopted during the 6th meeting in Brussels 2001), including an overview of the various relevant technical co-operation activities being carried out by the ASEM partners. Co-operation activities should underpin the various TFAP objectives, such as improved alignment, best regulatory practice, and confidence building.

3.3. Public procurement

3.3.1. initial goals

- ◆ Considering ongoing work in other fora, the TFAP would aim at promoting transparency in public procurement, in particular through exchanging information on public procurement procedures, statistics and opportunities.

3.3.2. Specific deliverables 2000-2002

Considering ongoing work in other fora, the TFAP will aim, in particular, to improve transparency within the public procurement domain at a practical level, for example through exchange of information on procedures, statistics, and opportunities.

The deliverables were:

- improvement in the exchange of information on central government procurement procedures and making them available in a user friendly format to the business community
- the continuation of ASEM information workshops and seminars on government procurement and invitation of AEBF to these seminars;
- improvement of access to information about procurement opportunities especially through increasing electronic procurement opportunities;
- encourage wide participation of ASEM partners in the Government Procurement Agreement.

3.3.3. Evaluation

The working group has started to address its goals.

The ASEM TFAP seminar on Government Procurement and IT was held on 23 March 2001 in Tokyo with the participation of representatives from most of the ASEM partners. It was chaired by Deputy Director-General Kojiro Shiojiri of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

It was the second seminar under the framework of the Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) for Government Procurement, aiming at contributing to the achievement of the majority of TFAP concrete goals for 2000-2002, following-up on the results of the first seminar that took place in Germany in September 1999.

There were eight presentations by six ASEM countries, focused mainly on the current status of the transition to e-procurement, followed by discussions amongst the participants.

All presentations drew attention to the need to make government procurement more efficient, transparent and user-friendly, with some members reporting on legislation that had already been implemented or was under consideration.

The participants emphasized the opportunities offered by information technology (M. The main points raised during the seminar in relation to "e-procurement" were as follows:

IT offers an effective means to provide enriched information on government procurement to suppliers and reduce costs for both governments and bidders. - All levels of government can benefit from the utilization of e-procurement. - **Standardization of e-procurement practices** within individual countries under "one roof" is important in reducing overlapping procurement procedures.

Continuing pilot projects are needed to ensure necessary system requirements (such as bidder identification, time stamping, and confidentiality of bid-price).

Further consideration should be given to contingency plans in the e-procurement process.

Small and medium enterprises should not be excluded from government procurement on account of any deficiency in IT capability. Even after introduction of e-procurement, bids should still be accepted in the conventional manner when appropriate.

Reverse auctions can be an effective means to reduce spending; however, it is important to recognize the risks inherent in the reverse auction process. Concerns were raised that the cheapest bid is not necessarily always the best - Consideration should be paid to open domestic procurement markets to foreign bidders to promote competition and transparency. - International harmonization in electronic authentication is necessary to make global electronic tendering feasible.

3.4. Quarantine and SPS Procedures

3.4.1. Initial goals

Considering ongoing work in other fora, the TFAP would *inter alia* help promote:

- ◆ a simplification and rationalisation in procedures and documentation considering international best practice; and
- ◆ the enhancement of transparency through the timely and accessible availability of information, drawing where appropriate on electronic media

3.4.2. Concrete deliverables for 2002-2004 were

Taking account of on-going work in other fora, the TFAP will, considering international standards, guidelines and recommendations, promote transparency and mutual understanding of procedures and documentation, drawing where appropriate, on electronic media.

The deliverables will be:

- following agreement to recognise the WTO SPS agreement as a benchmark for trade policies, ensure its timely implementation by all ASEM partners
- continue holding meetings between ASEM partners, in the margins of relevant international organisations (e.g. Codex Alimentarius, OIE, IPPC), continue this level of co-operation to further narrow differences and seek to reach a common position among ASEM partners, where possible;
- organisation of workshops on transparency and mutual understanding of quarantine and SPS procedures and/or more specific topics as appropriate.
- enhancement of transparency in key quarantine and SPS areas has been considered in depth. Partners should exchange information on relevant legislation and procedures and inform other partners promptly of any changes in structure or organisation;
- comment on quarantine and SPS impediments, as identified by the AEBF;
- development and compilation of guidelines and recommendations which can guide national legislators in the legislation-making process;

- exchange views and experience on the equivalence determination as well as encourage the ASEM partners to consider entering into bilateral consultations with the aim of achieving equivalence on the recognition of sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures.

3.4.3. Evaluation

The working group has started to address its goals.

A number of seminars and work-shops in all the areas foreseen in the work programme has been organised. This has started a dialogue over a wide range of issues in the SPS field. These event have enhanced mutual understanding of the approaches to SPS issues and has laid the ground for a continuation of cooperation in this area within the ASEM framework.

The wrap-up seminar on SPS was held in July 2002 in the Netherlands. One of the conclusions was the relatively low participation of the ASEM partners in the programme 2000-2002. Ways should be found to improve the participation. Furthermore, the low response to the questionnaire, distributed by the facilitators of the programme, was also noted.

It is recognised that the involvement of the business sector could contribute to achieveing the goals of ASEM TFAP SPS.

3.5. Intellectual Property Rights

3.5.1. Initial goals

- ◆ Considering ongoing work in other fora, the TFAP would promote a broad-ranging dialogue among ASEM partners on IPR-related issues, thus encouraging an enhanced understanding of the application of intellectual property rules in both the public and the business sector.

3.5.2. Deliverables for 2000-2002

The concrete deliverables were:

- continued exchange of information on co-operation among ASEM partners in relation to IPR awareness and enforcement;
- organisation of colloquia including the business community, to enhance the understanding of IPR, where ASEM partners shall exchange information with a view to fostering an understanding of the economic rationale, effective implementation, including, in particular, adequate enforcement, of IPR protection and increasing the level of enforcement;
- achievement of the urgent and full implementation by ASEM partners of the WTO TRIPS Agreement;

- compilation of a set of actions to be taken before a third seminar on IPR would take place. This will facilitate the consideration of new modalities to enhance further improvements in the IPR field;
- intensifying co-operation among IPR experts through specific IPR working groups, including exchange of experience among law enforcement officers;
- facilitating access to information on national IPR through appropriate means while paying particular attention to the needs of SMEs;
- promoting awareness and understanding, through a series of seminars, on the relationship and the roles of Intellectual Property Law and Anti-Trust Law in order to create a fair business environment;
- setting-up a website on sources of relevant national legislation of ASEM partners, in accordance with the conclusions of the first seminar on intellectual property, held in June 1999.

3.5.3. Evaluation

Co-facilitators have addressed the majority of their goals.

France has organized a working group on IPR enforcement in Hanoi, on 16-17 May 2002. The second ASEM Seminar on IPR (Nakornrachasima, Thailand, March 2000) recommended that such a meeting should be held.

This meeting was aimed at exchanging views on national and regional systems in Asia and Europe, with a view to enhancing mutual understanding and to sharing best practices. Right holders have been given the opportunity to put forward their own priorities according to their individual experience.

The meeting adopted guidelines to be implemented on a voluntary basis by ASEM partners in order to overcome remaining shortcomings in IPR enforcement.

This activity allowed to address a number of the deliverables set for 2000-2002, such as the continued exchange of information, the involvement of the business sector and the intensified cooperation among IPR experts.

The co-facilitators have also circulated a synthesis report on all measures taken by ASEM Partners to overcome IPR obstacles to trade. They have proposed a common framework to be applied to the next national reports or updates.

3.6. Mobility of Business people

3.6.1. Initial goals

- ◆ With a view to facilitating direct business-to-business contact between the two regions, the Business Forum shall be requested to examine and report on concerns identified by the business community with respect to formalities for business travel and for temporary stay.

3.6.2. Deliverables for 2000-2002

With a view to facilitating direct business-to-business contacts between the two regions, contacts will continue with AEBF in order to examine concerns, if identified by the business community with respect to formalities for business travel and temporary stay.

The deliverable was

- on-going contact with AEBF to ascertain the impediments relating to business travel and temporary stay.

3.6.3. Evaluation

The issue of adopting an APEC travel card like system was briefly discussed during the meeting of senior officials on trade and investment on the eve of the Economic Ministers Meeting 3 in Hanoi in September 2001. No consensus was reached to continue further exploring this issue.

3.7. Electronic Commerce

3.7.1. Deliverables for 2000-2002

Electronic commerce was added to the list of TFAP priority areas only in 2000.

Overall goal of this working group: In supporting and enhancing the growth of e-commerce transactions between Asia and Europe, the ASEM Process, and the TFAP in particular, will aim at identifying and reducing the differences in existing regulations and standards which hinder Asia-Europe transactions, and examine the establishment of common standards and norms for Asia and Europe.

The specific deliverables were:

- identification of the results of ongoing activities and discussions at other international fora on e-commerce to be utilised and applied in the ASEM context; consultations on specific measures to promote on-line government procurement among ASEM partners;
- identification of the required ASEM co-operation measures to promote more reliable and secure e-commerce transactions, which include issues of authentication, certification, privacy protection and others;
- consideration of joint ASEM actions to strengthen consumer protection; discussion on identifying various problems and solutions of other e-commerce related technical standards issues;
- organisation of a seminar on e-commerce and logistics;
- exchanging experience on the influence of e-commerce on business start-ups, especially SMEs;

- associating the private sector, particularly through the Asia Europe Business Forum (AEBF), closely to these deliberations;
- Identification of the measures which can be taken, in the context of ASEM, to deal with intellectual property rights in the specific context of e-commerce.

3.7.2. Evaluation

The Working Group has addressed most of its goals.

The electronic commerce working group held a first meeting in October 2001, organised by South Korea and Finland. A second meeting is planned for September 2002.

The main purpose/objective of the meeting in October 2001 was to discuss the cooperation program to support and help e-commerce facilitation within ASEM and how to link and reflect the business community's recommendations, as represented by the Asia Europe Business Forum (AEBF), in the work of the working group. The Meeting took place simultaneously with the 1st ASEM Seminar on e-Commerce and a special ASEM e-Commerce Business Forum.

The seminar and e-commerce working group meeting took first steps towards identifying barriers to the development of electronic transactions between Asia and Europe and to finding solutions to reduce obstacles. Important issues reflecting largely the 2000-2002 deliverables were addressed during these meetings, such as e-commerce and SMEs, access to internet, consumer protection, authentication, certification and privacy protection, taxation, technical standards, and intellectual property rights. These meetings, together with a special ASEM e-Commerce Business Forum provided participants opportunities to exchange experiences on the influence of e-commerce on business start-ups, especially the SMEs.

Close involvement of the business community – the AEBF in particular – has been one of the leading principles of the working group. Following this principle, the October 2001 meeting agreed on a concrete work programme concentrating on three e-Commerce related priority themes - as per AEBF Singapore meeting recommendations - namely user confidence, cyber security and intellectual property rights.

For identification of the results of ongoing activities and discussions at other international fora the co-facilitators agreed to prepare an issues paper that discusses the identified priority areas on e-Commerce, summarises international developments in these areas and puts forward proposals for common recommendations. Alongside a legislative inventory within the three priority areas in each ASEM member state has been prepared. These documents are to be used as a basis for further ASEM work in this area.

It is planned that the second meeting of the working group – to be held back to back with the 2nd ASEM Seminar on e-Commerce - in September 2002 would adopt a set of draft recommendations on the three priority themes of user confidence, cyber security and intellectual property rights. This activity would address directly a number of the deliverables set for 2000-2002, including those of identification of the required ASEM co-operation measures to promote more reliable and secure e-commerce transactions; consideration of joint ASEM actions to strengthen consumer protection; and identification of the measures which can be taken, in the context of ASEM, to deal with intellectual property rights in the specific context of e-commerce.

A seminar on government procurement and IT in March 2001 (see 3.3.3.) was mainly devoted to the transition to electronic procurement, thus addressing the goal of promoting electronic procurement

3.8. Other trade activities

3.8.1. Initial goals

Taking account of work in other areas, TFAP would inter alia aim at

- ◆ promoting an exchange of views among partners, in both the public and business sector, on the manner in which market access in the distribution sector can best be enhanced, and
- ◆ creating an ASEM database or virtual market place, providing the business sector with easy access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on legal and administrative trade regimes of ASEM partners, business opportunities, and market trends.

3.8.2. Deliverables for 2000-2002

Taking account of work in other areas, TFAP will, inter alia, aim at promoting exchange of views on the enhancement of market access in the distribution sector, and creating an ASEM database or virtual market place providing the business sector with easy access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on legal and administrative trade regimes of ASEM partners, business opportunities and market trends.

The deliverables will be:

- promotion of increased awareness of existing databases in ASEM partners in the areas of customs, trade and investments, standards and conformance, quarantine and SPS, IPR and other similar databases;
- promotion of increased awareness of the Virtual Information Exchange (VIE) web-site – now transformed into the ASEM Invest Online (AIO) website - which provides information on the investment regime of all ASEM partners;
- promotion of increased awareness of ASEMConnect, which serves as a meeting place for partners to promote investment, business and trade;
- promoting closer links with the AEBF, through the clearinghouse approach; reply to Business Forum Recommendations and invitations of business representatives to relevant ASEM meetings;
- support for the WTO's work programme on trade facilitation, inter alia by organising a symposium/workshop for, among others, trade and customs officials, the private sector and possibly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), on the WTO's trade facilitation work – and thereby contributing to that programme the relevant ASEM expertise.

3.8.3. Evaluation

As concerns the promotion of databases available in ASEM partners, the ASEM Invest Online website and ASEMConnect the goal was addressed by putting information on these instruments on the agenda of a number of ASEM related meetings. These presentations allowed raising awareness of these instruments.

The AEBF was invited on a regular basis to many ASEM meetings, including the Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Industry, the Investment Expert Group and the working groups of the Trade Facilitation Action Plan. The goal of promoting links with the AEBF was therefore effectively implemented.