



World Customs  
Organization

# Enhancing Integrity at Borders

The role of trade facilitation  
in the fight against corruption



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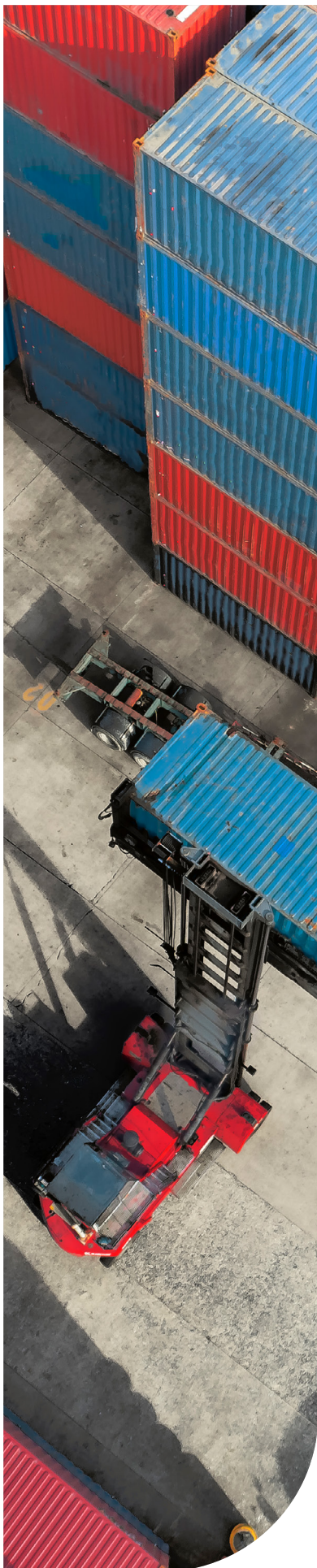
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# 1. Introduction

## How integrity and corruption impact trade

Integrity is fundamental to sustainable trade and economic growth. Corruption, in its various forms, undermines this foundation by increasing costs, creating inefficiencies, and eroding trust in institutions. Globally, bribery alone costs about US\$1.2 to US\$1.5 trillion which is around 2% of global GDP.<sup>1</sup>

Corruption refers either narrowly to bribery or more broadly to any perversion of integrity. It tends to thrive in environments, such as borders, where procedures are complex and management is shared among different government agencies, including Customs, health, and agriculture. In these environments, transparency and predictability are lacking or absent. These conditions provide opportunities and discretionary power to actors to abuse their vested powers for personal gain, including through offering or requesting bribes or facilitation payments. Corruption includes practices such as extortion or solicitation, trading in influence, and laundering the proceeds of these activities. These corrupt practices directly challenge the principles that underpin fair trade, making it critical to combat corruption to ensure sustainable economic growth.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, corruption has a disproportionate impact on micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and women traders. MSMEs, already constrained by limited resources and capacity, are particularly vulnerable to corruption when navigating complex procedures across multiple border agencies. The financial burden of corruption can stifle innovation, limit market access, and reduce competitiveness.

Women-led MSMEs, already facing a financing gap and stifled growth opportunities, are strongly affected by corruption at borders. Specifically, solicitation of bribes and incidents of sexual extortion not only hamper their participation in the economy but also perpetuate gender inequality.<sup>3</sup>

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1 UNODOC, OECD, World Bank (2021): The impact of corruption on sustainable development. Think piece for G20 Anti-corruption working Group. P. 6.

2 ICC (2023): ICC Rules on Combatting Corruption. [ICC Rules on Combatting Corruption - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#). P. 13.

3 TRALAC (07/04/2024): [Accelerating Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs: Gateway to regional, continental, and international trade - tralac trade law centre](#)

## Why does trade facilitation matter for integrity at borders?

Trade facilitation is the simplification and harmonisation of international trade procedures, including activities, practices, and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating, and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade.<sup>4</sup>

By reducing complexity and increasing transparency and predictability, trade facilitation limits opportunities for illicit practices, such as bribery and facilitation payments. Critically, digitalising these processes reduces day-to-day interactions between the public and private sectors, further reducing the risk of corruption.

While multiple government agencies share responsibility for border management, Customs has a uniquely strategic role. As the primary enforcer of trade regulations, its decisions directly impact the smooth flow and security of cross-border trade.

Corruption and unethical behaviour by border officials can create artificial barriers, increase uncertainty, and distort competition. Therefore, it is essential to not only combat these practices but also to promote a culture of integrity that ensures clear and fair rules for all operators and contributes to the creation of a more predictable and competitive environment.

Against this backdrop, this publication outlines how enhancing integrity at borders and leveraging trade facilitation can effectively address corruption risks. It explores why these strategies should be central to the anti-corruption efforts of both companies and Customs administrations and offers actionable guidance.

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4 WCO Glossary of International Customs Terms (06/2024): <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/glossary-of-international-customs-terms.aspx>



## 2. Risks to integrity at borders

Customs processes are vital for safeguarding societies and maintaining accurate economic statistics. However, both fraud and corruption can significantly hinder the achievement of these objectives. Fraud – including false customs declarations, fraudulent permits, misdeclarations, and undervaluation of goods – has the same effects as corruption. Both practices distort economic data, cause revenue losses and pose severe risks, such as the entry of mislabelled or unsafe goods into the market. Fraud and corruption undermine trust in Customs administrations, hindering their ability to fulfill their mission and negatively impacting trade facilitation.

A key factor contributing to the risk of corruption is that customs procedures are often highly complex and, particularly in the absence of digital processes, include many direct interactions between the public and private sectors. For example, obtaining an export licence or certificate may require companies to visit multiple governmental offices to get a paper document stamped, which can be both time-consuming and costly. This process can be worsened by arbitrary demands for additional documentation, which creates opportunities for Customs officials to abuse their discretionary decision power and demand facilitation payments, while also tempting companies to pay to expedite the process to save time and costs.

It is clear that Customs and businesses face interconnected risks to integrity at borders, with corruption and inefficiencies at the core.

The following table provides an overview of risks to integrity.

**Table 1: Risks to integrity at borders for Customs and business**

Risks	Customs	Business
<b>Financial risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revenue loss</li><li>• Increased costs due to inefficiencies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unfair competitive advantages</li><li>• Increased costs</li></ul>
<b>Regulatory and legal risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criminal and/or administrative liability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criminal and/or administrative liability</li></ul>
<b>Operational and internal threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overburdened systems and inefficiencies, driving up costs and lowering performance</li><li>• Insider corruption, collusion, data leaks, misconduct</li><li>• Low expertise in compliance frameworks, leading to underestimation of the relevance and importance of proper anti-corruption risk assessment, proper policies, training, and investigations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of predictability</li><li>• Employee theft</li><li>• Collusion, data breaches, fraud</li><li>• Pressure to perform and clear shipments may incentivise offering of facilitation payments</li></ul>

Risks	Customs	Business
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance-based incentives and rewards tied to fine collection, creating conflicts of interests</li> </ul>	
<b>Reputational and social risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of public trust and legitimacy</li> <li>Low employee morale and negative impact on talent retention, creating a cycle where ethical staff members leave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethical and brand reputational damage</li> <li>Low employee morale and negative impact on talent retention, creating a cycle where ethical staff members leave</li> </ul>

## Addressing the risks: ICC and WCO initiatives

These challenges not only highlight the risks to integrity at borders but also point to the need for solutions that address these vulnerabilities. Fighting corruption and fostering integrity are key priorities for the WCO and ICC, which is reflected in several initiatives, outlined in the following table.

**Table 2: Key integrity initiatives**

International conventions and frameworks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WCO Revised Arusha Declaration (RAD)<sup>5</sup>: The declaration is the WCO's central policy document concerning good governance and integrity in Customs, emphasising the importance of 10 key factors.</li> <li>WCO Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC)<sup>6</sup>: The convention sets out principles for simplifying and harmonising customs procedures, promoting transparency, and reducing opportunities for corruption.</li> <li>WCO SAFE Framework of Standards<sup>7</sup>: This framework aims to secure and facilitate global trade by enhancing Customs-to-business partnerships and implementing risk management practices.</li> <li>WCO Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce<sup>8</sup>: This framework provides global standards for the effective management of cross-border e-commerce, impacting trade facilitation, safety and security, and compliance.</li> </ul>

5 WCO (2003): The Revised Arusha Declaration, the WCO's central policy document concerning good governance and integrity in Customs.

6 [World Customs Organization](#), Revised Kyoto Convention.

7 [World Customs Organization](#), SAFE Package.

8 WCO (2022): Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce. [wco-framework-of-standards-on-crossborder-ecommerce\\_en.pdf](#).

## Capacity building and tools

- WCO Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme<sup>9</sup>: This programme supports Customs administrations in identifying and mitigating corruption risks through capacity-building and technical assistance.
- WCO Performance Measurement Mechanism (PMM)<sup>10</sup>: The mechanism outlines the methodology for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of all Customs competencies, including trade facilitation and performance that impacts integrity.
- WCO E-Learning Modules on Integrity<sup>11</sup>: These learning materials are available for free in the WCO Academy.
- WCO Trade Facilitation Tools: The tools support the building of integrity through predictability and transparency and automation, e.g. the WCO Compendium on Building a Single Window Environment<sup>12</sup>, WCO Data Model<sup>13</sup> and WCO tools on disruptive technologies.
- ICC Trade Facilitation Initiatives: ICC works closely with the WCO and other international organisations to promote and introduce trade facilitation measures that reduce bureaucratic barriers and enhance transparency. For example, the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, a public-private partnership, co-hosted by ICC, delivers targeted and measurable trade facilitation reforms in developing and least developed countries.

## Frameworks and tools for business

- ICC Rules on Combating Corruption<sup>14</sup>: These rules provide a comprehensive framework for businesses to implement anti-corruption measures and promote ethical conduct. They are a core instrument within ICC's anti-corruption tools, focused on private sector anti-corruption training and self-regulation.
- ICC Anti-Corruption Clause<sup>15</sup>: This clause is intended for companies to include in their agreements, whereby they undertake to comply with the ICC Rules on Combating Corruption or commit to putting in place and maintaining an anti-corruption compliance programme. It provides parties with a contractual provision that will reassure them about the integrity of their counterparts during the pre-contractual period as well as during the term of the contract and even thereafter.
- ICC Resisting Extortion and Solicitation in International Transactions (RESIST) Tool<sup>16</sup>: This practical ICC tool for company employee training includes scenarios and step-by-step guidance covering the presales and bidding stage as well as the post-award project implementation stage.

9 [World Customs Organization](#), A-CIP Programme.

10 WCO (2023): [Performance Measurement Mechanism](#).

11 [Integrity – WCO Academy](#)

12 [World Customs Organization](#), Compendium on Building a Single Window Environment

13 [World Customs Organization](#), WCO Data Model

14 ICC (2023): ICC Rules on Combating Corruption. [ICC Rules on Combating Corruption - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#).

15 ICC (2016): ICC Anti-Corruption Clause. <https://iccwbo.org/news-publications/icc-rules-guidelines/icc-anti-corruption-clause/>.

16 ICC (2011): [Resisting Extortion and Solicitation in International Transactions \(RESIST\) - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#).

### 3. The role of trade facilitation in combatting corruption

Trade facilitation measures that enhance integrity are those that increase transparency and predictability in trade operations. These include:

- Digitalisation and paperless trade
- Clear and transparent regulatory frameworks
- Public-private partnerships

#### **Digitalisation and paperless trade**

Modern, automated customs procedures and systems can reduce opportunities for corruption by reducing discretionary review and decision-making powers. Digitalisation goes beyond simply “digitising” physical documents – it requires a transformation of the whole process and system.<sup>17</sup> More specifically, automation tools such as risk management systems, single window systems, and advanced electronic information streamline processes, minimise human intervention, and enhance transparency. For example, the implementation of single window systems allows traders to submit regulatory documents at a single location, reducing the need for multiple interactions with Customs officials or other government officials. Disruptive technologies can contribute to ensuring transparency and traceability in customs procedures, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption.

#### **Clear and transparent regulatory frameworks**

Clear and transparent regulations are essential in preventing corrupt practices. Predictable and well-defined rules reduce discretionary decision-making and provide a level playing field for all traders. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) emphasise the importance of transparency and predictability in trade operations, ensuring that traders have access to clear information about border procedures and requirements. Both agreements include a right of appeal (WTO TFA, Art. 4 and WCO RKC, General Annex Chapter 10).

#### **Table 3: How the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and WCO Revised Kyoto Convention foster integrity**

While the main objectives of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and WCO Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) are to simplify, modernise and harmonise import, export, and transit processes, they also create a cohesive framework for combatting corruption and upholding integrity at borders.

We explain key provisions of the TFA and how it aligns with the RKC.

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17 See Matsudaira, T., & Koh, J. (2022). “Chapter 7: Customs Administration and Digitalization”. In Customs Matters. USA: International Monetary Fund. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400200120.071.CH007>. P. 204ff.



## Which TFA provisions aim to foster integrity and limit opportunities for corruption?

- **Article 1:** Publication and availability of information  
→ Ensures transparency by mandating public access to customs regulations, reducing information asymmetry that fosters corruption
- **Article 4:** Right of appeal  
→ Ensures accountability by providing traders the possibility to challenge decisions, reducing the risk of arbitrary or corrupt practices
- **Article 5:** Impartiality, non-discrimination, and transparency  
→ Promotes fairness and impartial treatment, limiting opportunities for favoritism or abuse
- **Article 6:** Disciplines on fees and charges  
→ Requires transparent, non-arbitrary fees, discouraging the imposition of unofficial payments
- **Article 10:** Simplification of procedures  
→ Encourages standardised and simplified documentation, reducing discretionary powers and associated risks  
As a practical example, TFA Article 10.4 encourages the establishment of single windows, permitting traders or transporters to submit only once all the data needed for determining the admissibility of the goods in a standardised format to the authorities involved in border controls and at a single portal

## How do the TFA and the RKC complement each other?

	RKC	TFA
<b>Transparency</b>	Advocates for clear and accessible customs laws and procedures	Requires publication and easy access to trade-related information (Article 1)
<b>Simplification</b>	Emphasises the harmonisation of customs procedures	Calls for simplified documentation requirements and formalities (Article 10)
<b>Modernisation and technology</b>	Promotes IT integration for efficient customs operations	Authorises and encourages the use of electronic payment and processing to expedite goods clearance (Article 7)
<b>Risk management</b>	Endorses risk-based controls for effective enforcement	Formalises risk management systems to avoid arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination (Article 7.4)

## Public-private partnerships

Joint efforts between the public and private sectors enhance enforcement and build trust. Public-private partnerships provide opportunities for collective action against corruption and improve the effectiveness of trade facilitation measures. For instance, National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), which are mandated under the WTO TFA, should include integrity as

a standing item on their agenda, fostering collaboration between Customs, other border authorities and businesses to address corruption risks. Chambers of commerce can be a useful avenue for Customs to engage with the private sector on anti-corruption programmes.

### **Strengthening trade integrity and trade facilitation in Tanzania through its Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme**

The Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), with the support of the WCO A-CIP Programme, has improved trade efficiency and reduced corruption risks by promoting and strengthening its Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme. Beyond the optimisation of procedures, training provided by the WCO to the TRA highlighted how AEO programmes can serve as a key tool to improve integrity in the logistics chain, fostering more transparent and predictable practices.

AEO programmes, based on the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, set strict compliance criteria that include supply chain security, financial soundness and compliance with customs regulations. Within these criteria, integrity plays a key role as certified companies must demonstrate a track record of compliance and good practices that minimise the risks of corruption and fraud, thereby reinforcing integrity in Customs administrations.

The AEO concept has become increasingly relevant in international trade, not only as a mechanism to facilitate customs clearance, but also as a key tool to strengthen integrity in the supply chain.

The implementation of AEO programmes contributes significantly to transparency and trust between traders and Customs administrations, reinforcing the principles of security and compliance. When implemented under the WCO RAD principles approach, these programmes reinforce transparency, accountability and good governance, ensuring that anti-corruption measures are incorporated and integrity is promoted.

### **Cutting red tape and driving digitalisation at ports in Guatemala**

A Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation<sup>18</sup> project in Guatemala showcases the potential to improve efficiency and reduce corruption risks by digitalising documentation procedures at ports.

Previously, the ship arrival and departure processing at Guatemala's busy main ports required shipping agents and ships' captains to make multiple in-person visits to comply with slow and cumbersome paper-based authorisation formalities. The Alliance partnered with the Guatemalan public and private sectors to automate these procedures through the National Single Window (VUMAR), creating greater uniformity and efficiency.

Since its completion in 2024, the initiative has significantly reduced physical exchanges of documents, cutting processing times by 85% and leading to projected annual savings of US\$4 million. By automating the control and monitoring of vessel movements, VUMAR has transformed authorisation procedures and enhanced integrity in port operations, by increasing overall transparency and accountability and curtailing the latitude for malfeasance, ensuring that all transactions are traceable and verifiable.

18 Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation. <https://www.tradefacilitation.org/our-projects/cutting-red-tape-at-ports/>

## How the private sector promotes the use of e-government and trade facilitation as an anti-corruption tool

### Biopharma company GSK

In Section 5 on Solicitation and Extortion of GSK's Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy, relevant business units are required to encourage practical measures to reduce the risk of solicitation, such as:<sup>19</sup>

- Use of electronic communications with external parties.
- Use of internal or external legal support when attending meetings with parties that present a higher risk of solicitation.
- Use of schemes or systems that reduce face-to-face contact when interacting with government officials or making financial transactions, even when this involves payment of a valid fee. This may include:
  - E-invoicing;
  - E-filing of taxes, contributions, licencing;
  - E-procurement, e-tendering, e-sourcing;
  - Electronic platforms for interactions or transactions with governments;
  - Trade facilitation schemes such as authorised operators, expedite shipments, pre-arrival processing, etc.;
  - Taking part in open constructive dialogue with external organisations to promote transparency, reducing of corruption risk and any other improvements to the business environment.

These measures highlight the importance for corporate operations to leverage trade facilitation schemes and digital tools that limit direct interactions with the public sector.

### Consumer packaged goods company Unilever

Unilever's Code of Business Principles and Code Policies section on Anti-Bribery details the "Musts" and "Musts not" for its employees with regards to fighting corruption and dealing with public officials which is considered particularly high-risk.

Notably, the "Must" section stipulates: "Use electronic communications or e-government solutions (in areas such as licencing, procurement, taxes, brand protection, etc.) or any other means available to reduce face-to-face interactions with public officials and the connected risks of bribe solicitation."<sup>20</sup>

19 GSK (2016): Anti-Bribery & Corruption Policy. <https://www.gsk.com/media/7821/anti-bribery-and-corruption-policy-v15.pdf>. Section 5 Solicitation and Extortion.

20 Unilever (2023): Code of Business Principles and Code Policies. [a7ad961ef886a578ab4dd316b4e5195cbc0965a0.pdf](https://www.unilever.com/content/dam/unilever/documents/a7ad961ef886a578ab4dd316b4e5195cbc0965a0.pdf). P. 17.



## 4. Challenges and opportunities

While trade facilitation is a powerful tool and an effective risk-reduction measure in the fight against corruption, it also has its own set of potential risks and limitations. Just like with paper-based processes, one significant risk is data manipulation, where inaccurate or falsified information can be entered into public or private digitalised customs systems, leading to incorrect assessments and potential revenue losses. Cybersecurity threats are another major concern, as the digitalisation of customs procedures makes systems vulnerable to hacking and data breaches. An additional risk to both public and private entities are internal threats, which can undermine compliance and integrity programmes. Finally, Customs officials and businesses may be reluctant to adopt new procedures and technologies or undeterred, stymying anti-corruption efforts.

To mitigate these risks, it is essential for both Customs and businesses to establish strong governance structures and monitoring mechanisms. Implementing robust cybersecurity measures can protect customs systems from hacking and data breaches. Regular audits and performance evaluations can help identify and address instances of data manipulation and other corrupt practices. Additionally, providing training and support to Customs officials and businesses can help overcome resistance to reform and ensure the successful implementation of trade facilitation measures through effective change management.

Further, it is critical to address the “demand side” of corruption as recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021. This can be achieved through increased risk awareness, comprehensive training, robust policies, third-party due diligence and monitoring, and collective action.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, while trade facilitation measures are valuable tools against corruption, they are not sufficient on their own. These measures must themselves be carefully designed to minimise corruption risks during implementation. The WCO Revised Arusha Declaration and its Integrity Development Guide emphasise that additional tools, particularly audit and investigation, are crucial both to prevent and detect irregularities and to strengthen institutional integrity. Effectively addressing corruption requires a comprehensive approach that combines trade facilitation with robust codes of conduct, human resource management policies, and other key measures outlined in the Arusha Declaration.

By holding Customs officials accountable for their actions, these measures help to deter corrupt practices and promote ethical behaviour.

Public-private partnerships also play a crucial role in enhancing enforcement and building trust between Customs authorities and businesses and should be seen as a critical component for trade facilitation. Engaging with the private sector, for example through NTFCs or chambers of commerce, can help Customs better understand industry practices and thereby improve their enforcement strategies for maximum effectiveness.

By bringing together the expertise and resources of both sectors in a structured manner, these partnerships can help streamline customs processes, improve compliance, and finally reduce trade barriers – fostering integrity.

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21 OECD: [Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions](#), Section XII.

## 5. Recommendations

Corruption, in its various forms, increases costs, creates inefficiencies, and erodes trust in institutions. Indeed, the performance of Customs authorities often serves as a reliable barometer of how the public perceives government quality as a whole.

The table below outlines key actions that Customs authorities and businesses can take to foster integrity at borders.

**Table 4: Actionable recommendations for Customs and business**

Customs	Business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Digitalise</b> and implement paperless trade procedures and processes</li> <li>• <b>Enhance legal safeguards</b> by ensuring that national legislation categorises any form of corruption as a criminal offence and that there is a proper right of appeal mechanism in place in line with WTO and WCO agreements and standards</li> <li>• <b>Raise awareness</b> of bribe solicitation risks and provide training on the demand side, including on domestic bribery and solicitation laws, as well as effective enforcement mechanisms<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• <b>Address small facilitation payments</b> in internal controls, ethics, and compliance programmes or measures<sup>23</sup></li> <li>• <b>Publish on a publicly available website</b> the rules and regulations governing gifts, hospitality, entertainment, and expenses for domestic public officials so that individuals and enterprises are aware of such rules and can abide by them<sup>24</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advocate</b> for transparent regulations</li> <li>• <b>Participate in integrity awareness</b> and training programmes as well as voluntary compliance measures (e.g., AEO programmes)</li> <li>• <b>Apply a risk-based approach</b> to identify, assess, and understand specific company risks and adopt appropriate mitigation measures<sup>25</sup></li> <li>• <b>Automate processes</b> and enhance controls</li> <li>• <b>Develop compliance programmes and controls</b> that include guidance on how to interact with public officials legitimately and safely when conducting business activities<sup>26</sup></li> <li>• <b>Prohibit and discourage the use of small facilitation payments</b><sup>27</sup></li> <li>• <b>Monitor and evaluate</b> the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and trade facilitation initiatives to ensure continuous improvement</li> </ul>

22 OECD, Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in *International Business Transactions*, OECD/LEGAL/0378. [OECD Legal Instruments](#)

23 OECD, Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in *International Business Transactions*, OECD/LEGAL/0378. [OECD Legal Instruments](#)

24 OECD, Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in *International Business Transactions*, OECD/LEGAL/0378. [OECD Legal Instruments](#)

25 ICC (2023): ICC Rules on Combatting Corruption. Art. 3. [ICC Rules on Combating Corruption - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#)

26 ICC (2023): ICC Rules on Combatting Corruption. Art. 4. [ICC Rules on Combating Corruption - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#)

27 ICC (2023): ICC Rules on Combatting Corruption. Art. 4C. [ICC Rules on Combating Corruption - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce](#)

Customs	Business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Foster a transparent zero-tolerance culture</b>, anchored in accountability through committed leadership, and publicly recognise Customs officials who demonstrate ethical behaviour such as reporting bribe attempts</li> <li>• <b>Establish robust feedback mechanisms</b>, including anonymous reporting channels and regular surveys, for traders and businesses to report instances of corruption or inefficiencies in customs procedures that could help identify and address issues more effectively</li> <li>• <b>Increase cross-border collaboration</b> between Customs authorities to share best practices, intelligence and resources for combatting corruption, for example through the WCO</li> <li>• <b>Monitor and evaluate</b> the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and trade facilitation initiatives to ensure continuous improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Foster a transparent zero tolerance for corruption culture</b>, anchored in accountability through committed leadership</li> </ul>

As part of a comprehensive approach to combatting corruption, trade facilitation plays a vital role in enhancing integrity by simplifying, modernising, and harmonising border processes. This reduces complexity while increasing transparency and predictability, thereby limiting opportunities for illicit practices such as bribes and facilitation payments.

While the full implementation of the TFA offers significant benefits to countries with estimates showing that it helped reduce trade costs worldwide by an average of 1-4%<sup>28</sup> and boosted global trade by over US\$230 billion, it should also be seen as a powerful tool to boost integrity at borders with the biggest gains in developing and least developed countries.<sup>29</sup>

Public-private collaboration is essential for effective trade facilitation and strengthening border integrity. The WCO – representing 186 Customs administrations worldwide – and ICC – representing more than 45 million companies in over 170 countries – are calling for collective action to fight corruption at borders and stand ready to collaborate to foster integrity to promote security, inclusivity, and prosperity.

28 Yann Duval, Chorthip Utoktham (07/2022): Has the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement helped reduce trade costs? An e-post analysis. UNESCAP Working Paper Series No.2, [Has the WTO trade facilitation agreement helped reduce trade costs? An ex-post analysis | ESCAP](#), p. 13. (Last accessed 10/03/2025).

29 Angela Ellard (26/02/2025): Trade Facilitation Agreement: Eight years of cutting trade costs and boosting growth for all members. [WTO Blog | Trade Facilitation Agreement: Eight years of cutting trade costs and boosting growth for all members](#) (last accessed 10/03/2025).



## About the World Customs Organization

The WCO represents 186 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade. As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.



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## About the International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the institutional representative of more than 45 million companies in over 170 countries. ICC's core mission is to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. Through a unique mix of advocacy, solutions and standard setting, we promote international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation, in addition to providing market-leading dispute resolution services. Our members include many of the world's leading companies, SMEs, business associations and local chambers of commerce.



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