Finland is an active donor in the field of trade facilitation. In addition to country-specific projects and the contribution to the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF), Finland has been funding a number of regional and multilateral trade development projects recently. Our support is channeled mainly through Multilateral Agencies that have the required expertise to deliver technical assistance in trade facilitation. The Finnish government believes that the combination of supporting regional trade and assistance to the private sector will accelerate economic growth and support job creation, with the ultimate goal of poverty reduction.

Out of the recent trade facilitation related projects supported by Finland, I'd like to highlight our support to the TradeMark East Africa (TMEA). The cooperation aims at advancing trade and supporting regional trade integration within East African Community (EAC) e.g. by reducing the time and cost of transiting and transporting goods. Creating economic opportunities for women is also a central part of the strategy of the TradeMark East Africa. Finland's support for the project in 2017–2020 totals 9.8 million euros. Our Dutch colleague will present the Safe Trade Facility in further detail in a minute.

I would also like to mention a recent three-year project titled “To progress the trade facilitation agenda, within the framework of the WCO Mercator Programme in the East and Southern Africa Region 2016-2018”. The project was implemented by the World Customs Organization and it aimed at increasing intra-African trade as well as trade between Africa and the rest of the world by supporting Customs reform and modernization in beneficiary countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The project aimed to help the beneficiary countries to implement the TFA and contributed to facilitating trade and improving procedures of ESA customs administrations.

I am happy to provide more information bilaterally to those interested. Thank you for your attention.