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Communique

NCTF Meeting 19 November 2024

The National Committee for Trade Facilitation convened for its second and final meeting of the year at the Australian Border Force (ABF) Head Quarters in Canberra, ACT. The Chair Ms Tharanie Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary Strategy and Policy Division, opened the meeting and thanked members for their continued engagement.

The Chair provided an overview of ABF matters of note from the last 12 months, including:

- References to the valedictory speech by outgoing Commissioner Michael Outram APM - notably his vision for the future of ABF; introductory remarks regarding Mr Gavan Reynolds AO, who was sworn in as ABF Commissioner on 10 November 2024; areas of focus for engagement and co-design between ABF and industry; and priority initiatives including Trade Identity, Paperless Trade, Australian Trusted Trader, Border Targeting 2.0, Supply Chain Security and the establishment of a Futures Forum.

Austrade's Simplified Trade System (STS) Unit provided an update regarding the transition of STS coordination, with a focus on a strategic forward planning, regulatory reform and developing an STS portfolio oversight and evaluation function. The STS Unit then led a discussion in relation to Fit and Proper Person (FPP) assessments reforms to reduce the administrative burden on industry. Parliamentary processes will dictate the timeframe for implementation of the framework, which may take up to 18 months.

Members then discussed options for Australian Trusted Traders (ATT) to assist in strengthening Supply Chain integrity. Other updates included:

- The establishment of a Virtual Targeting Centre to process data provided by industry for ABF analysis regarding emerging risks, which, on receipt of advice from ABF, will allow industry to proactively remove criminal exploitation of their elements of the supply chain; the recent establishment of the Supply Chain National Coordination and Reform section; and advice that the ABF Trade-based Money Laundering (TBML) Lighthouse project will be considered by the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Policy Committee in Dec 2024.

Members received an update on the establishment of the Futures Forum, designed to incorporate 'strategic foresighting.' The concept is expected to mature to reflect a consensus approach to benefit all participants.

The ABF led members in a discussion regarding the review of the Terms of Reference, and broader NCTF arrangements. Points for consideration include succession planning within industry and how this might look across the committees; feasibility of Industry/ABF co-chair arrangements; and representation of state and territory governments and international finance and insurance companies. Committee governance discussions remain ongoing.

The next NCTF meeting will be held on 8 April 2025.

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