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# The “Single Window” Concept

Presented by Alan Morley  
to the  
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## The Single Window Concept -- The World Customs Organization's Perspective

- A single window is defined as a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfill all **import**, **export**, and **transit** -related regulatory requirements.
- The single window is clearly a trade facilitative measure. It permits the trader or transporter to submit all the data needed for determining admissibility of the goods in a standardized format only once to the authorities involved in border controls and at a single portal.
- The Single Window concept places the onus on the authorities to manage the Single Window and to ensure that the participating authorities or agencies are either given access to the information or are actually given the information by the managing authority. It eliminates the need for the trader or transporter to submit the same data to several different border authorities or agencies.



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## The Single Window Concept -- The World Customs Organization's Perspective

- Implementation of a Single Window does not necessarily imply the implementation and use of high-tech information and communication technology. The Single Window concept can be implemented in a manual environment with the co-operation of all border authorities.
- However, countries may enjoy fuller benefits of a Single Window by using ICT and dataset standards commonly accepted by the relevant public and private stakeholders.
- In particular, the use of internationally accepted standards, such as, Harmonized System of Commodity Description and Coding, the WCO Data Model and the Unique Consignment Reference is important. Agencies involved in Integrated Border Management should determine the minimum essential amount of data necessary to effect their controls.



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## The Single Window Concept -- The World Customs Organization's Perspective

- Governments should develop co-operative arrangements between Customs and other Government agencies involved in international trade in order to facilitate the seamless transfer of international trade data (Single Window concept) and to exchange risk intelligence at both national and international levels.
- This would allow the trader to electronically submit the required information once to a single designated authority, preferably Customs.
- In this context, Customs should seek close integration with commercial processes and information flows in the global supply chain, for example by making use of commercial documentation such as the invoice and the purchase order as the export and import declarations.
- If examination of the goods is necessary, the co-ordination of physical inspection amongst the relevant agencies adds significantly to the value of the Single Window.



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## The Single Window Concept -- The World Customs Organization's Perspective

- There is no standard system of Integrated Border Management that can be followed by Governments when implementing an Integrated Border Management System. However, Members have developed policies and systems addressing the elements mentioned above which can be considered as best practices.
- The following illustrates how these elements of an Integrated Border Management System could be dealt with:
  - Designate the competencies of border points to handle goods requiring specific inspections;
  - Coordinate these designations with neighboring countries;
  - Move controls inland with documentary checks performed at the border by one lead agency and referrals made to the appropriate agency when necessary;
  - Cross-designate officials and train them to perform the duties of several agencies who were traditionally present at the border;
  - Establish a “single window” where parties involved in trade and transport can lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point in order to fulfill all import, export and transit related regulatory requirements; and
  - Create a single border agency responsible for all functions at the border.



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## Experiences of Other Countries with the Single Window Concept

There are various models of a "single window" system that have been developed and effectively introduced:

- "Single window" can involve a single authority, where Customs coordinates and/or enforces all border-related controls (e.g., Sweden and the Netherlands).
- It can mean a single system, integrating the electronic collection, use and dissemination of international trade data related to cross-border trade (e.g., the US).
- It can also be an automated system through which a trader submits electronic trade declarations to the various controlling agencies for processing and approval in a single application; the approved permits are then transmitted electronically to the trader's computer. Singapore's TradeNet is an example of a "single window" system that takes this form.



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## Singapore

- Since 1989, Singapore has put in place an EDI-based system known as TradeNet.
- As part of the overall objective to simplify import and export formalities and requirements for traders, TradeNet replaces the previous cumbersome paper-based procedures that traders had to follow to process their customs documents, and serves as the "single window" for one-stop service clearance/release facilities through coordination among multiple agencies.
- TradeNet was first introduced on a trial basis with a group of 50 users. Currently, there are over 2,400 traders, shipping agents, freight forwarders, air cargo agents, etc., linked to TradeNet.
- All permit applications for imports and exports are processed electronically through TradeNet, which processes about 20,000 applications on a daily basis. This translates to about 8 million applications a year.



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## Singapore

Benefits observed from the implementation of TradeNet:

- An improved level of service to the trading community, and improved human resource management for both traders and agencies.
  - In the paper-based environment, documents had to be physically delivered and collected – and this could only be done during office hours.
  - Using TradeNet, documents can be transmitted and the approved permits received electronically, 24 hours a day.
  - Furthermore, while previously it took between 2 and 7 days to obtain approval, now an application can be approved within 10 minutes on average.
- The elimination of voluminous paperwork has resulted in an overall reduction in business costs for traders.
- More efficient customs control, which enhances risk management; uniform enforcement of customs legislation; and faster production of trade statistics.





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## Thailand

- A pilot project, or so-called One-Stop Export Service Center, led by the Department of Export Promotion and the Thai Customs Department, is now being implemented taking initially into account functions and requirements of 8 agencies based on Customs value framework to provide a web-based Single Window Entry system that enables exporters to apply for trade permits and licenses/certificates through centralized e-Forms.
- This new multi-governmental agency unit was created in early June 2002 within the Export Promotion Department to expedite the process of granting export certificates. The Center aims to shorten the application process by one week, granting approval to food exporters within one to three days.
- The second phase of the project will incorporate relevant technologies such as digital signature and data water marking to enable exporters to print approved licenses/certificates from their own Personal Computer.



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## Turkey

- Turkey has initiated an "e-Document Project in Foreign Trade" which sets up the infrastructure of a Single Window approach. This project is being pursued in order to produce, share and circulate the documents used in foreign trade, in the electronic environment. A free trade zone has been determined as a pilot zone for the implementation of the project.
- Effectiveness, transparency and predictability of foreign trade operations will be enhanced further with the enforcement of the Project. The decrease in the number of documents and the decrease of bureaucracy, the implementation of the relevant institutions on the electronic environment, and the opportunity to conduct operations via the internet, will provide broader and more accessible facilities to exporters and importers, and to the intermediary sectors such as transportation, finances and insurance.
- Furthermore, the Project is aimed to increase the level of cooperation between the public and private sectors.



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## WTO Negotiations On Trade Facilitation – Compilation Of Members' Proposals (Oct 2005) Single Window/One-Time Submission

### Main Measure(s) Proposed

- "Introduction of procedures for allowing one-time submission of import or export documentation to one authority (...) (including coordinating the timing and place of physical inspections among the relevant authorities to the extent possible)". (*Japan, Mongolia, Chinese Taipei and Peru, TN/TF/W/17*).
- "Acceptance of single documentary submission of import or export documentation requirements in cases of repeated transactions of same products; Exemption of documentary submissions for each importation or exportation should be permitted". (*Japan, Mongolia, Chinese Taipei and Peru, TN/TF/W/17*).
- "... Members should establish a 'single window', which would act as a clearinghouse for all documents and data submission" so that traders would need "to submit data only once on the basis of streamlined document formats" with the 'single window' agency administrating all information on the document" (*Korea, TN/TF/W/18*).



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## WTO Negotiations On Trade Facilitation – Compilation Of Members' Proposals (Oct 2005) Single Window/One-Time Submission

### Main Measure(s) Proposed (continued)

- "Recommendation to establish a single-window mechanism at borders or ports with efficient computer back-up" (*Peru, TN/TF/W/30*).
- "... efforts toward the one-stop service clearance/release facilities through inter-agency coordination, plus remote filing and local clearance facilitates, are crucial." (...) "... should consider whether rules could be developed to ensure that the activities and requirements of all agencies present at borders are coordinated in a manner designed to facilitate trade." (...) "An agreement on trade facilitation may cover provisions on a Single Window approach whereby Members gradually undertake necessary measures." (*Turkey, TN/TF/W/45*).
- "Progressive implementation of the principle of a single, one-time presentation to one agency, normally the customs, of all documentation and data requirements for export or import, subject to any exceptions to be identified." (*European Communities, TN/TF/W/46*).



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## WTO Negotiations On Trade Facilitation

### Proposal on the Introduction of Single Window / One-Time Submission

- **The following proposal, dated 9 May 2006, was circulated to WTO members** at the request of the Delegations of Japan, Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu:

#### I. Introduction

- The main purpose of single window/one-time submission is to allow parties involved in trade and transport to lodge required information and documents with a single entry point on a one-time basis, to fulfill all imports, exports, and transit-related regulatory requirements.

#### II. Key Elements of Single Window

- All documentation and data requirements for exportation and importation are submitted, one time only, to a single entry point and distributed to all the relevant authorities.
- Coordination is endeavored among the relevant authorities in introducing a single window/one-time submission environment.
- A single window does not necessarily imply the implementation and use of high-tech information and communication technology (ICT), although facilitation can be enhanced if relevant ICT technologies are identified and adopted.



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# **Why Should Countries Implement the Single Window Concept?**



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## Why Implement the Single Window Concept?

- Modern trading practices make it essential for administrations to provide simple, predictable and efficient border procedures for the clearance of goods. Border Management systems and processes must not be allowed to serve or be perceived as a barrier to international trade and growth.
- In a highly competitive world environment, international trade and investment will flow toward efficient, supportive and facilitative locations. At the same time it will rapidly ebb away from locations that are perceived by business as bureaucratic and synonymous with high costs.
- Effective and efficient clearance of goods increases the participation of national industry in the global marketplace and contributes significantly to the economic competitiveness of nations, encourages investment and development of industry and increases the participation of small and medium enterprises in international trade.





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