



South Sudan: Trade Facilitation environment and main constraints to trade

Danilo Desiderio, HoAI Secretariat, trade expert

The youngest country in Africa, South Sudan country became an independent state in July 2011, following a referendum held in January 2011 in which 98.8% of the South Sudanese people voted in favor of separation from the Republic of Sudan.

The country is a Member of the East African Community (EAC) - which it joined in October 2016 – of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, it has not yet ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, an initiative launched in 2015 by EAC, COMESA and the Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC) that aims to combine into an enlarged Free Trade Area (FTA) three of the main Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa¹. South Sudan is also a signatory of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)², even though it is yet to ratify it. Ratifying the AfCFTA would facilitate access to larger, diversified, and more sophisticated markets, thereby promoting its own diversification efforts and increasing its resilience to shifts in terms of trade and global supply chain shocks.

The country also holds the status of observer to the World Trade Organization (WTO), having applied for membership on 5 December 2017. The Working Party – the body responsible for driving the WTO accession process – was established on 13 December 2017. So far, however, this body has met only once, on 21 March 2019. The South Sudanese government authorities submitted the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR)³ to the Working Party on 21 December 2018, but further support is needed in order to complete the accession process. South Sudan has also not yet acceded to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (revised Kyoto Convention) of the World Customs Organization (WCO). The revised Kyoto Convention is a blueprint for effective and modern Customs procedures and a major trade facilitation instrument. It aims at ensuring the application of

¹ According to art. 39.3 of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement the minimum threshold required for the Agreement to legally enter into force is 14 ratifications, while this Agreement has been ratified so far only by 11 Tripartite countries, namely: Kenya, Egypt, Eswatini, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (source: COMESA).

² https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf

³ The MFTR is a document drafted by the WTO acceding State according to the methodology defined by the note WT/ACC/22/Rev.1 of 5 April 2016 of the WTO Secretariat, which provides a comprehensive summary of the acceding government's foreign trade regime, including relevant statistical data, with a description of the institutional framework, the economic, monetary and fiscal situation and the economic, commercial and competition policies adopted, including the related development plans.

simplified customs procedures in a predictable environment and in a transparent manner, promoting maximum use of information technology, the utilization of risk management techniques for channeling controls, partnerships with traders and other private stakeholders, and the establishment of a readily accessible system of appeals against decisions taken by customs authorities.

South Sudan's most important resource, oil, was discovered in the 1980s. At independence the country took control of its oil wells, although the oil infrastructure that allows oil resources to be transported to international markets is still mostly located in the present-day Sudan. The Greater Nile Oil Pipeline, an oil export pipeline that extends for approximately 1,600 kilometers, connects the Unity oil field (a major oil field in the northern-central part of South Sudan) to Port Sudan, and represents at the moment the only export route for South Sudanese petroleum. According to the financial year 2021/22 budget, the oil transportation and transit fees that the country currently pays to Sudan are estimated to constitute about 2.8 percent of the South Sudanese GDP⁴.

Latest available data⁵, referring to the year 2020, show main exports of South Sudan are oil (82.6%) and gold (13.02%). Other exports are concentrated within a few low-value agricultural and forestry commodities, such gum arabica and timber, despite the enormous agriculture potential of the country, which holds among the richest and fertile soils in Africa, with abundant water supplies⁶. Goods that can potentially play an important role in driving diversification include live animals, meats, hides, edible vegetables and fruit, oil seeds, wood and wood products, cotton, and non-oil minerals. South Sudan has also abundant fishery resources, with an estimated total area of 80,000 square kilometers of fishing ground that is centered along the White Nile river system, which encompasses the largest permanent wetland in Africa. However, the main bottleneck for the development of the meat and fish processing sectors is the lack of post-harvest processing facilities and difficult transportation to consumption centers⁷.

Main obstacles to trade

South Sudan has many challenges in cross border trade, the high cost of doing business across borders being the major constraint.

The World Bank (WB) study Doing Business 2020, ranks the country 180th out of 190 economies in term of ease of trading across borders, well below the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average, as shown in the figure displayed in the next page⁸.

⁴ World Bank, South Sudan Economic Monitor Towards a Jobs Agenda, Fifth Edition February 2022.

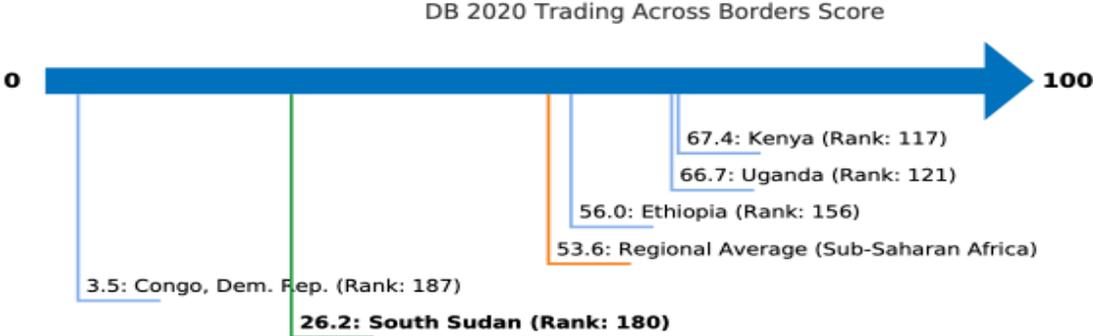
⁵ Source: International Trade Centre.

⁶ In this regard, it has to be noted that despite approximately 75% of the country's land area is suitable for agriculture, at the moment only 4% is being put to use.

⁷ World Bank, "Directions for Reform: A Country Economic Memorandum for Recovery and Resilience in South Sudan", 2022.

⁸ <https://archive.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/s/south-sudan/SSD.pdf>

Figure 1: Trading across borders in South Sudan: comparison with other economies in East Africa



Compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, cost and time for importing goods are considerably higher in South Sudan, where the average trader has to wait **179 hours** for border clearance at import and **146 hours** for border clearance at export, for a total cost, respectively, of **781 and 194 USD** (against the regional average of 690.6 USD at import and 172.5 USD at export). On the other hand, completing documentary compliance takes **360 hours** at import and **194 hours** at export (against the regional average, respectively, of **96.1 and 71.9 hours**).

Figure 2: Trading across Borders - South Sudan

Indicator	South Sudan	Sub-Saharan Africa	OECD high income	Best Regulatory Performance
Time to export: Border compliance (hours)	146	97.1	12.7	1 (19 Economies)
Cost to export: Border compliance (USD)	763	603.1	136.8	0 (19 Economies)
Time to export: Documentary compliance (hours)	192	71.9	2.3	1 (26 Economies)
Cost to export: Documentary compliance (USD)	194	172.5	33.4	0 (20 Economies)
Time to import: Border compliance (hours)	179	126.2	8.5	1 (25 Economies)
Cost to import: Border compliance (USD)	781	690.6	98.1	0 (28 Economies)
Time to import: Documentary compliance (hours)	360	96.1	3.4	1 (30 Economies)
Cost to import: Documentary compliance (USD)	350	287.2	23.5	0 (30 Economies)

Lack of road connectivity, poor security on roads and dilapidated cross-border infrastructure are the main challenges that hamper South Sudan trade, these three factors seriously limiting the economic growth and export development of the country. Connections with adjacent countries, and particularly with the largest economies in the region (Ethiopia and Kenya), are few, with roads in poor status and insecure. Operations at border crossing points are conducted manually, with invasive physical inspections of goods and complete absence of technology, such as modern IT-based risk management systems, x-ray scanners and weighbridges. This situation results in significant delays in customs clearance processes which increase costs for traders. Electricity and water

supply, financial services, internet services and mobile services are also poorly developed at these sites, which further limits the cross-border movement of people and goods.

Nimule-Elegu, the main border crossing post between South Sudan and Uganda (which is the South Sudan's main trade partner in Africa), is an exception. This border post, which in February 2020 started operations as a One Stop Border Post (OSBP), has been fitted with new facilities. However, they are not yet fully operational on the South Sudan side (South Sudan Customs at the moment still operate from temporary offices, awaiting to be accommodated in a new facility), while those on the Ugandan side at Elegu were already in place in November 2018. At Nimule-Elegu, an average of 200 trucks crosses the border post daily. A fiber optic cable link is also available, but only Uganda Customs and other border agencies are connected to the national ICT backbone of their country, while South Sudanese agencies are not. Currently the Nimule-Elegu OSBP, together with the Juba airport, handles the overwhelming part of South Sudan trade, accounting for 90% of the total import, export and transit operations of the country (source: National Revenue Authority, South Sudan).

Another main challenge to the utilization of roads in South Sudan remains their **insecurity** and the frequent extortion and harassment practices by security agencies and unauthorized individuals falsely claiming being security officials. In this regard, the National Revenue Authority first strategic plan (2022-2027) notes the presence of rebels and armed tribal militias in some areas, as well as the prevalence of roadblocks and informal checkpoints on South Sudanese roads. These represent major obstacles to the smooth flow of trade, which increases cost of doing business and contribute the weak market integration of South Sudan with his neighbors. Moreover, during the rainy season, when many South Sudan's unpaved roads become impassable and motor vehicle accidents are particularly frequent, exposure to security risks and to requests of payment at illegal (unauthorized) checkpoints further increases. Rebel groups are still at large in some parts of the country, where they use to lay ambushes along roads. In the recent past, cases of truckers that have been attacked by armed people, with their vehicles and transported merchandise burnt, became frequent. To address the issue of security on its roads, the Republic of South Sudan has put in place physical escorts for truckers and increased patrols along roads⁹. In this regard, it should be noted that the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) implemented along the Northern Corridor¹⁰ for monitoring the movement of trucks carrying goods in transit to avoid their diversion in unauthorized places, does not cover South Sudan yet, although EAC has plans for extending such a system to the Nimule border post¹¹. Risk of diversion of transit goods is

⁹ Report of the Northern Corridor, South Sudan Stakeholders Consultative Visit and Sensitization Mission 28th June – 1st July 2021, Juba.

¹⁰ The Northern Corridor is the busiest and most important transport route in East and Central Africa, providing a gateway through Kenya to the landlocked economies of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern DR Congo, as well as South Sudan.

¹¹ The EAC has developed since 2018 a web-based Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) that is currently implemented along the Northern Corridor from the place of departure to destination within the territories of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. The system is based on the use of GPS devices affixed on trucks and provided by one of the companies licensed by one the Revenue Authorities of the EAC partner States, which incorporate a microchip that activates if broken or if there is any tampering or intrusion effort. Such devices allow therefore customs administrations in the region to track the movement of vehicles along

particularly high on the roads connecting Uganda to South Sudan. The Northern Corridor Time Release Study published in 2016 by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) revealed that instead of exiting from Uganda through the Nimule border post, in many cases truck drivers carrying transit goods exit through not authorized border points (mainly Oraba and Madyope) to reach their destination in South Sudan, thus escaping to customs surveillance.

Being a landlocked country, South Sudan relies on seaports located in its coastal neighbors for channeling its import trade. Due to the long distance and poor road infrastructure, supply of materials from neighboring countries is subject to great delays and costs.

At present, South Sudan predominantly uses the Mombasa port and (to a lesser extent) Port Sudan for channeling its international trade operations. With a volume of approximately 1.1 million tonnes of cargo handled annually and expected to grow, Mombasa port is the main conduit for South Sudanese trade. There, cargo destined to or originating from South Sudan represents almost 10% percent of the total volumes of transit cargo handled by the port, the highest share after Uganda, which accounts for 83 percent of such traffic.

Once landed in Mombasa, cargo destined to South Sudan moves in transit along the Northern Corridor passing through the cities of Nakuru and Eldoret in Kenya, entering in Uganda through the One Stop Border Post (OSBP) of Malaba, moving through Totoro and Gulu, to reach South Sudan through the Nimule/Elegu border post. The total distance traveled is about 1,900 km.

From Mombasa, goods are alternatively transported via railway to the Naivasha Inland Container Depot, where they are uploaded on trucks that continue the transport via road up to destination passing by the town of Eldoret, in Kenya. From Eldoret, the Northern Corridor bifurcates into another road link that connects the northern-west Kenya to the Eastern Equatoria State in South Sudan through the border post of Nadapal, as shown in figure 3 below. However, this section is less used because of the particularly poor conditions of the route and the high security risks. A report from of a team led by Northern Corridor Secretariat drafted after the conclusion of a stakeholders' consultative visit and sensitization mission held in Juba from 28th June to 1st July 2021¹², points out that containers destined to South Sudan take "long time" (although no further information is provided) to be returned to the shipping lines at Mombasa Port. This situation causes shipping companies that own containers to apply high container retention charges to shippers, freight forwarders and transporters, which, in turn, incorporate such costs in

road corridors, so to ensure the integrity of consignments. The movement of cargo is monitored by specific Command Operating Centres (COCs) currently located in four (4) locations at designated national Revenue authorities: in Kenya, Uganda, DRC and Rwanda. CoCs monitor the movement of trucks in real time on screen and share information with each other. Every time such an incident occurs or an irregularity is detected (e.g., a stop in a not authorized place along the route or a prolonged stop), COCs send alerts to rapid response teams that are sent on the spot for verification. Rapid response teams have at their disposal fast vehicles and computer tablets to localize the violation scene with accuracy and precision.

¹² <https://top.ttcanc.org/uploads/attachments/cl1uujt8401yy0jqxeu68i498-report-of-the-northern-corridor-consultative-mission-to-south-sudan-jul2021.pdf>

their transport fares. The report recommends the South Sudan security agencies to apply stricter enforcement measures to ensure that containers are returned back to the port without delays.

Figure 3: Northern Corridor: road sections used in transport of goods from the Mombasa port to South Sudan



Connectivity with Port Sudan, on the other hand, is ensured by a series of roads between the port and the towns of Malakal (in Upper Nile State), Bentiu (in Unity State), Aweil (in Northern Bahr El Ghazal State) and Wau (Western Bahr El Ghazal State). Wau (South Sudan's second largest city) and Aweil are also linked to Port Sudan through the Babanusa-Wau Railway, an international railway line¹³ that remains closed since 2013, when the civil war erupted between the two countries, despite the agreement reached in 2018 to reopen it¹⁴.

Very recently, on 13 September 2022, the South Sudanese Ministry of Petroleum announced to have been granted a concession by the government of Djibouti on a 12,000 square meters of land within the Doraleh port area. It envisages the construction of a logistics facility to store and consolidate both import goods and goods to be exported through the port, with prospects for the establishment of a new port¹⁵. However, a main challenge for the utilization of the Djibouti port is the poor road connectivity, as currently, the roads connecting the two countries through Ethiopia are in a poor state of maintenance, exacerbated by some missing links that do not allow the use of such incomplete routes for trade purposes. In this regard, the completion of the Kampala-Juba-Addis Ababa-Djibouti transport corridor can be a game changer. This road corridor was identified among the key transport corridors in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region during the Tripartite and IGAD Infrastructure Investment Conference held from 28th to 29th September 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya¹⁶ (see next figure). On May 15, 2019, the

¹³ African Development Bank, South Sudan: An Infrastructure Action Plan. A Program for Sustained Strong Economic Growth, 2013.

¹⁴ Sudan Tribune, South Sudan - Sudan discuss reopening Babanusa-Wau railway, January 11, 2022.

¹⁵ Charles Wote, South Sudan buys 3 acres of land at Djibouti port, September 13 and Shela Ponnice, South Sudan Hopes Planned Port in Djibouti Will Increase Market Access, Profits, VoaNews, September 24, 2022.

¹⁶ https://igad.int/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/349_tripartite_igad_infrastructure_communiqie.pdf

Ministries of Transport and Roads of Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda signed an MoU where they fully commitment to the implementation of the project, which is expected to be financed, at least in parts, by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and is being developed in phases, with some sections not yet built¹⁷.

Figure 4: Kampala-Juba-Addis Ababa-Djibouti road project

On 29 April 2022, during a meeting held in Juba between the Minister of Roads and Bridges of the Republic of South Sudan and the Ethiopia’s Ambassador to South Sudan, the Gambella-Pagak-Faluji road was identified as a priority route critical for increasing bilateral and regional trade



between the two country¹⁸. This meeting was followed by the submission by the Ministers of Finance of the two countries of a joint request to the AfDB for funding the construction of the following road sections: 1) Pagak-Mathiang-Paloch; 2) Juba-Torit-Nadapal-Lokichogio; 3) Gambella-Maiwut-Mathiang-Paloch; 4) Dima-Raad-Boma-Pibor-Bor. Feasibility studies, engineering design and environmental and social impact assessments have partially been carried out.

Lastly, as part of the Kenya Vision 2030 Strategy (the national long-term development policy that aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country by 2030), a corridor linking the Lamu Port, in Kenya to Juba via Isiolo – Lodwar and Nadapal has been planned. The Project, nicknamed “Lamu Port South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport” (LAPSSET) corridor, will offer an alternative transport route for South Sudan shippers. The LAPSSET corridor is part of the Trans-African Highway and the East-West Trans-Africa Beltway Corridor (TABC) Initiative, which aims to connect Lamu Port to Port of Douala/Kribi (Cameroon) through Juba and Bangui.

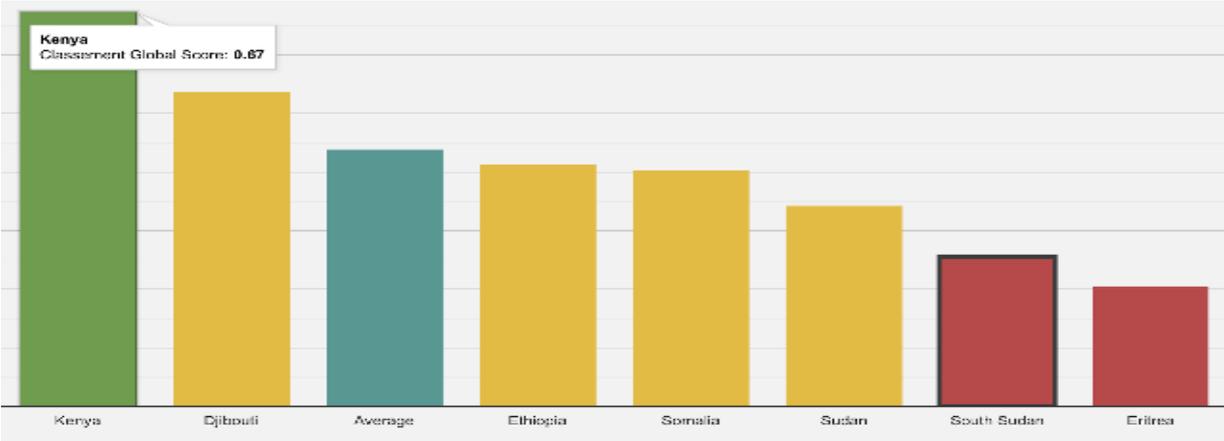
¹⁷ <https://projectsportal.afdb.org/dataportal/VProject/show/P-Z1-DB0-108>

¹⁸ Ethiopia, South Sudan Officials Review Implementation of Road Building Agreements, Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), Apr 28, 2022.

Level of integration of South Sudan in the Horn of Africa region

The Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) Platform ¹⁹, a dedicated website developed by UNECA²⁰, the AUC²¹ and the AfDB for monitoring performances and progress in terms of regional integration in the eight African Union-recognized²² Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and in the various African States, shows the poor performances of South Sudan compared with other African HoA nations. The ARII points out that the country is the least integrated in the HoA region after Eritrea (see Figure below).

Figure 5: South Sudan performance in regional integration compared to other HoA countries



More precisely, the ARII analyses five dimensions: 1) trade, 2) regional infrastructure, 3) productive integration, 4) free movement of people and 5) financial & macroeconomic Integration. Data referring to South Sudan reveal that the country is among the ones with the least integrated infrastructure in the HoA region and in all the African continent, together with Eritrea, Somalia and Chad. From a trade perspective - the foundational motivation of integration in many RECs - the country is given a 0.38 ranking score which is below the 0.44 regional average, meaning that import/export exchanges with other countries in the HoA are particularly low. It must however be noted that this score is inflated by the inclusion in it of trade with Uganda, which in recent years has emerged as a large exporter of goods to South Sudan. Over 150,000 Ugandan traders are reported

¹⁹ <https://www.integrate-africa.org>

²⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

²¹ African Union Commission.

²² These are the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

to stably operate across the Nimule-Elegu border, annually moving to South Sudan goods whose value is estimated to be superior to 350 USD million²³.

Assessment of the trade facilitation environment in South Sudan

Following a mission conducted to Juba from 12 to 16 September 2022, an assessment was made by the trade expert attached to the HoAI Secretariat concerning the trade, transport and customs policies and the initiatives put in place so far by South Sudan to improve its trade facilitation environment. This analysis was aimed at identifying the level of alignment of such policies and initiatives, as well as of the strategic priorities of the Republic of South Sudan, with the goals and activities described in the HoAI Trade Facilitation Roadmap²⁴. The results of this assessment are described hereunder.

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs): NTBs are commonly defined as any barrier to trade other than import and export duties. They include import bans, government monopolies, cumbersome documentation requirements and restrictions resulting from prohibitions, conditions or specific market requirements that make the importation or exportation of products difficult and/or costly.

A key role in identifying and solving Non-Tariff Barriers, as well as in planning and implementing trade facilitation reforms is played nowadays by National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFC). These Committees are important platforms for institutional coordination and stakeholders' consultation with balanced private and public sector participation. South Sudan has not yet established a NTFC, but it conducted in 2018-2019 a mapping exercise of NTBs, with the support of TradeMark East Africa (TMEA). This exercise resulted in the adoption by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) of a strategy for NTBs elimination and the establishment of a **National Monitoring Committee on NTBs**. Primary activities undertaken during this assignment included the implementation of a SMS²⁵-based platform through which economic operators can report such barriers²⁶. Since then, the South Sudan National Monitoring Committee on NTBs holds periodic joint consultations with similar Committees established in the other EAC partner States in order to address and solve NTBs having a regional dimension.

South Sudan has not developed so far a Trade information portal: Trade information portals (TIPs) are electronic platforms that guide businesses in cross-border trade by offering traders a one-stop-shop with comprehensive information on regulation and procedures applicable to import, export and transit of different categories of products. Offering free access to regulations and procedures to be followed in order to complete an international trade transaction - with a single, clear and unequivocal description of steps that traders need to put in place - responds to a principle of administrative transparency. In fact, the simpler it is to understand rules, procedures and formalities related to

²³ TradeMark East Africa, \$4m earmarked to improve Uganda, South Sudan trade, June 4TH, 2018.

²⁴ <https://hoainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/HoAI-Trade-Facilitation-Roadmap-English.pdf>

²⁵ SMS stands for Short Message Service and is a service that allows to send text-only messages via mobile phones of up to 160 characters.

²⁶ <https://imanidevelopment.com/consolidating-interventions-on-the-non-tariff-barriers-elimination-in-south-sudan-2018-2019/>

international trade operations, the more traders will be prone to engage in them. Accordingly, the development of such portals is highly recommended.

In the EAC, TIPs have a common standard design. Trade portals of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have been built with a similar architecture and are integrated in an EAC Regional Trade Information Portal that offers access to all of them via a single interface²⁷. The future South Sudan Trade Portal - a solution that is highly recommended, considering the lack of transparency of customs- and trade-related rules, procedures and formalities in this country - and for which there are currently no plans, should follow a same approach.

Status of automation of customs procedures: the South Sudan National Revenue Authority introduced in March 2022 a comprehensive web-based revenue management system called E-Tax system²⁸, developed by a South Sudanese company (Crawford Capital Ltd.). E-Tax includes a module allowing traders to submit and monitor customs declarations from a tablet or other handheld device connected to a mobile phone network. However, the system is operational only at the Nimule border post and the Juba airport, which, as mentioned earlier, together handle about 90% of South Sudan's trade. Apart from these two facilities, at all the other customs stations customs procedures are conducted manually. Importantly, the E-Tax system lacks of a customs risk management module. This module could enable revenue and customs authorities to enhance their ability to detect irregular declarations and illegal or suspicious movements of goods, persons and financial flows. This detection is based on the analysis of the data element present in tax and customs declarations, of the taxpayers and traders' historical activity and the number of past frauds detected. Risk management systems are nowadays indispensable tools for conducting customs controls. The huge quantities of commodities and products that are exchanged across international markets, coupled with the need to reduce congestion at ports, airports and inland borders so to assure a fast release of goods to operators, make it almost impossible to check all goods that enter or leave a customs territory. IT-based risk assessment techniques can significantly speed controls and avoid discretionary intervention of customs officers in the selection of consignments to be inspected. They rely on leveraging software-generated risk profiles resulting from the assessment of both subjective (i.e., related to the operator) and objective (i.e., related to goods)²⁹ indicators extracted from customs declarations and other commercial documents. Such techniques, therefore, facilitate trade allowing Customs to focus controls only on "high-risk" commercial operations, by directing declarations into appropriate control channels (e.g., "green channel" = immediate release of goods without examination; "red channel" = physical examination of goods and documents, "yellow

²⁷ <https://tradehelpdesk.eac.int/>

²⁸ <https://etax.nra.gov.ss/>

²⁹ Ex: known trader; financial situation of the operator; level of compliance to tax and customs regulations and frequency of transactions they carry out; nature of cargo (e.g., hazardous/non hazardous goods); value; origin and destination of goods; eligibility for tariff preferences; applicable duties; mode of transport used; and previous examination results.

channel” = documentary check only; “blue channel” = examination at a later stage, i.e., within a post clearance audit)³⁰.

South Sudan does not have **Single Window** (SW) system, with the consequence that traders have to visit in person the different regulatory agencies responsible for issuance of certificates, authorizations, licenses and permits required for customs clearing purposes. In most cases, this requires submitting redundant and repetitive data and information to each of them, mostly in paper form. These extensive and duplicative requirements, with their associated compliance costs, constitute a serious burden to both governments and the business community in the country and represent a barrier to the development of international trade. SW systems reduce the burden of these formalities by expediting and simplifying information flows between the private sector and the public sector, bringing meaningful gains to all parties involved in cross-border trade.

According to the Recommendation No 33 of the United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)³¹, a Single Window is 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. Its main aim is to simplify regulatory formalities and reduce operating costs for traders by avoiding them to submit redundant information and data to all the actors involved in cross-border operations. Essentially, instead of multiple documentary transmissions, traders lodge via an electronic platform a single package of data containing all the information regarding the envisaged trade transaction. Such data are automatically distributed to all the concerned actors, both for regulatory purposes (e.g., Customs and other government authorities or inspection agencies) and for commercial, logistics or financial reasons (e.g., banks, insurances, forwarding agents, customs brokers, independent inspection companies, etc.). The principle behind SW systems is therefore the reusability of the same data to comply with multiple regulatory requirements of both private and public agencies that are active in the international trade sector.

Axle load regulation: As a member of the EAC, South Sudan is bound to the Vehicle Load Control (Vehicle Dimensions and Axle Configurations) Regulations, 2018³², which currently sets an axle load limit of 56 tons for a maximum seven axles for commercial trucks using the regional road network, with penalties for overloading that increase proportionally according to the amount of the excess weight. However, enforcement of axle load limits in the country remains low, also because there are no weighbridges in South Sudan. Unharmonized axle load limits, gross vehicle weights and/or maximum vehicle dimensions represent a significant regulatory burden for transport operators, as they encourage transshipment at borders. When these limits in the territory of a neighboring country are lower, trucks cannot continue their trip and have to offload cargo

³⁰ In addition to such control channels, some Customs administrations also adopt an “Orange channel” which directs examination of goods towards an X-ray scanner or other non-intrusive inspection methods. In case of detection of concealed materials in the composition of cargo, controls are subsequently re-routed into the red channel (physical examination).

³¹ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/recommendations/rec33/ECE-TRADE-352_Rev.1E_Rec33_2020Edition.pdf

³² <https://www.eac.int/documents/category/eac-regulations>

at the border or in its proximity, so that it can be transferred onto other vehicles of the destination country for delivery at destination. In some cases, it may be necessary to split cargo in two or more consignments that are thereafter picked up by two or more trucks. As transshipment operations at border posts are in most cases manually conducted, transshipment cost further escalates transport costs and increase risk of goods being damaged, acting as a deterrent to trade.

Simplified Trade Regime (STR): Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) is an important economic activity in South Sudan that provides livelihood for many people, especially women and youths. Being such trade unregulated, uncontrolled and unrecorded, it escapes taxation, leading to loss of revenue for the government. A simplification of formalities and documentation for small-scale traders could encourage ICBT to formalize. The STR has precisely this objective, i.e., to facilitate small-scale cross-border traders by reducing to a minimum the formalities to be carried out at borders and the documentation to be submitted to Customs for declaring their goods. This is done by allowing them to use a simplified form and a simplified certificate of origin³³. Both these documents are submitted directly at the border post and stamped and certified by the customs office of the import country. STRs are based on the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention, which at the Transitional Standard 4.13 allows Customs to exonerate traders from payment of customs duties and taxes for transactions under a minimum threshold, which in EAC and COMESA is of 2,000 USD.

South Sudan has not yet implemented a STR. However, discussions are currently ongoing between South Sudanese and Ugandan Customs for the introduction of such simplified regime at the Nimule OSBP.

Road Management Information System (RMIS): to monitor the condition of trade corridors, allowing roads and traffic authorities to rapidly intervene in case of maintenance needs, incidents, or other road traffic interruptions, many countries in Africa deploy today a Road Management Information System (RMIS), a GIS³⁴-based technology that provides real-time information on traffic and on the status of roads, by sending alerts to road and traffic authorities so that immediate maintenance interventions can be actioned. Often the system also sends information on traffic and the status of the different sections of road corridors to truck drivers and other road users, by indicating alternative routes that can be taken in order to avoid interruptions in their trip, so reducing congestion and increase safety. Information on condition of roads is usually collected through vehicle-mounted sensors that periodically inspect road pavement status to provide empirically-based surface assessments that are used by Ministries of transport and roads authorities for planning road maintenance. Such a system is adopted by the Kenya Road Board (the authority responsible for coordinating maintenance, rehabilitation and development of roads in Kenya), and the Ethiopian Roads Authority. South Sudan has not adopted any RMIS.

³³ In the case of the COMESA STR, the certificate of origin is not required with regard to goods that are included in a common list approved bilaterally by the adjoining States.

³⁴ Geographic Information System.

Time Release Studies (TRS): TRSs are one of the measures recommended by the World Customs Organization (WCO) for assessing the performance of Customs and other border agencies and for identifying bottlenecks in the clearing process in order to take appropriate corrective measures aimed at addressing and solving them. TRSs measure the average time taken between the arrival of the goods and their release, as well as other relevant aspects of the effectiveness of operational procedures that are carried out by Customs and other regulatory actors in the processing of import, export and transit consignments. **South Sudan has not conducted so far, any TRS**, even though in 2016 it participated to the development of a TRS undertaken by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Co-ordination Authority (NCTTCA) Secretariat to measure bottlenecks along the Northern Corridor³⁵.

Authorized Economic Operator (AEO): the AEO is a particular authorization or status granted to economic operators that particularly reliable in the context of their customs-related operations, following to an on-site audit conducted by Customs that demonstrates they have in place an adequate system of control of compliance of their operations to the applicable customs regulation. AEOs benefit from simplified import and export processes in terms of fewer security and safety related controls and priority treatment in the clearance process. South Sudan Customs has not developed any AEO program, even though in the EAC a regional AEO program has been operational since 2006. Such a program allows traders granted with such certificate in one of the EAC partner States to benefit from the same level of facilitation in any part of the EAC where they are conducting business. A similar system would be highly beneficial to HoAI countries if implemented in the region.

Conclusions

The HoAI Trade Facilitation Roadmap seems well aligned with South Sudan needs in terms of Trade Facilitation. The goals and activities described in this document are consistent with the national priorities of the government, and correspond to concrete needs of the different categories of stakeholders met during the mission in Juba. The need to receive a support in the form of training and capacity building initiatives for government officials responsible for trade, transport and customs-related matters, has arisen during consultation meetings with government authorities. In particular, they highlighted at several occasions the need to receive a technical assistance for the effective implementation in the country of the priority actions, policies and projects described in the Roadmap, specifically for what concerns the development and strengthening of skills of the government officials who will head the planned projects.

South Sudan is a very young country that needs its capacity to implement reforms in the trade and regulatory policies to be reinforced, considering the consequences of decades of conflicts, as well as the post-independence economic crisis, precarious macroeconomic conditions and internal stability that it still faces.

³⁵ http://www.ttcanc.org/documents/NC_TRS_ENG.pdf