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MINISTRY OF FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

Sri Lanka achieved 95.8% Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement which is higher than the Global Average and Advances Its “TFA Plus” Agenda.

Sri Lanka has reached 95.8 per cent implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), above the global average of 87.6 per cent. Implementation oversight provided by the Ministry of Finance is coordinated through the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), established in line with Article 23.2 of the Agreement. The NTFC operates with a Secretariat comprising Sri Lanka Customs and the Department of Commerce and brings together 12 government agencies and 7 reputable national trade chambers. Uniting public institutions and the private sector around a shared reform agenda, the NTFC is proving to be one of the most successful public-private partnerships in the country.

All measures notified under Categories A, B and C of the Agreement have been completed, with definitive dates falling on or before 2027. The NTFC is also implementing a programme of measures, referred to as its “TFA Plus” agenda, that goes beyond the minimum requirements of the Agreement, to reduce the cost of trade, improve predictability for importers and exporters, and support Sri Lanka’s integration into regional and global value chains. The two largest structural commitments, both designated Category C, remain to be implemented, with definitive dates in 2030. The measures set out below have been undertaken under the “TFA Plus” agenda so far in 2026.

Regulatory: Advance Rulings Extended to Customs Valuation

Under Extraordinary Gazette Notification No. 2488/02 of 12 May 2026, the Advance Rulings regime has been extended to cover customs valuation, in addition to classification and rules of origin, the two areas required under Article 3 of the TFA. Valuation is an area in the Agreement leaves optional. Advance rulings on valuation provide importers with a determination in advance of importation, reducing uncertainty about costs and timing of customs clearance.

Technology: “CargoFlow” Container Queue Management System

“CargoFlow”, a Container Queue Management System developed in-house by the ICT Directorate of Sri Lanka Customs, was established as an outcome of the Time Release

Study (TRS) conducted in 2025 under Article 7.6 of the Agreement, which provides for the establishment and publication of average release times.

Time Release Study is an exercise that records how long goods take to move through each stage of the clearance process, from arrival at a port of entry to physical release, to identify where delays occur. CargoFlow addresses the gap between a container being cleared on documentation and its physical exit from the yard by providing real-time visibility of container movements, a controlled queue jointly managed by privately held cargo examination yards and customs house agents, and a verifiable digital record of each interaction at port exit gates and at each examination yard. The system will also support data collection for the scheduled Time Release Study in 2026.

Early Implementation: AEO and Post-Clearance Audit

Two operationally significant measures have been implemented ahead of their definitive dates. The Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme under Article 7.7, notified in 2024 with a definitive date of 31 December 2026, provides compliant traders with faster clearance and allows inspection capacity to be directed towards higher-risk consignments. So far, Sri Lanka Customs has awarded AEO status to 75 companies.

Post-Clearance Audit under Article 7.5, notified in 2024 with a definitive date of 31 December 2027, moves a portion of revenue verification from the point of importation to after clearance. Both measures have been implemented before the timelines permitted under the Agreement.

Remaining Commitments: Border Agency Cooperation and the National Single Window

Border Agency Cooperation under Article 8 and the National Single Window under Article 10.4 are the two remaining structural commitments under the Agreement, both with definitive dates in 2030. The National Single Window is being implemented by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the Trade and Investment Policy Department of the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with Sri Lanka Customs as the Lead Agency. These measures require coordination across multiple agencies, supporting legislative measures, and phased investment, and form the focus of the next stage of implementation.

Trade facilitation reduces the cost and time of cross-border trade and provides a more predictable operating environment for businesses. The Government, through Sri Lanka Customs and the NTFC, will continue to implement its remaining TFA commitments and to introduce further trade facilitation measures beyond the requirements of the Agreement.

Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development