

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING
29-30 OCTOBER 2018
WTO, GENEVA**

1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1 The meeting was chaired by Mr Paolo Garzotti (EU). He welcomed the evaluation team from Nathan Associates and informed members that: (i) UNCTAD, ITC, EIF, COLEACP, AU, OIRSA, GFISI, ICTSD, Michigan State University (MSU) and the Government of Japan had been granted observer status for the meeting; and (ii) two participants from the WTO SPS Advanced Course, which was being held in Geneva, would attend the presentation by Mr Kees van der Meer on "Building National SPS Systems".

2 The Secretariat informed members that two STDF developing country experts were unable to attend the meeting due to personal reasons, namely: (i) Ms Michèle Paultre (Director, Haiti Bureau of Standards); and (ii) Ms Sanniel Wilson (Chief Plant Quarantine Officer, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries, Jamaica). A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

3 The agenda was adopted with one amendment: the "Overview of the Evaluation of STDF projects" was moved to the start of the second day, under agenda item 5, as requested by Sweden.

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

2.1 Selection of vice-chairperson (2019) of the STDF Working Group

4 The Secretariat welcomed expressions of interest for the position of vice-chairperson in 2019 (and hence chairperson in 2020). The chairperson encouraged members to contact the Secretariat in this regard.

2.2 Selection of new SPS experts from developing countries

5 The Secretariat invited members to submit names and CVs of potential candidates to serve as new experts in 2019-2020, for selection by the incoming Working Group chairperson (Ms Loraine Ronchi from the World Bank Group), in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules. Members agreed on a deadline of 16 November 2018. The experts nominated for 2018-2019 will continue to serve the STDF in 2019, i.e. Ms Merriam Toalak, Dr Benoit Gnonlonfin and Ms Sanniel Wilson.

2.3 Ongoing evaluation of STDF by Nathan Associates

6 The Secretariat introduced the evaluation team from Nathan Associates, i.e. the company selected and contracted by the WTO to conduct the external evaluation of the STDF. This work officially started on 1 September 2018. An Inception Report was approved in October 2018 by an Evaluation Steering Group, consisting of FAO, Canada, Dr Benoit Gnonlonfin (developing country expert) and the chairperson of the Working Group.

7 The Secretariat briefed members about the next steps which include, *inter alia*: (i) interviews with STDF stakeholders; (ii) two country visits to Guatemala and Uganda (with a stop-over in Nairobi); and (iii) a deep-dive analysis of STDF's thematic work on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The draft evaluation report will be submitted to the Secretariat by 14 December 2018 and circulated to all Working Group members for comments (by 18 January 2019). A Policy Committee meeting is scheduled in February 2019¹ where Nathan Associates will present the final draft report. The final report (incorporating any further comments received from the Policy Committee, where appropriate) is due on 1 March 2019.

2.4 Staffing and financial situation

8 The Secretariat reminded members of the tight staffing situation due to an increasing workload. In addition, one staff members is on maternity leave, while one position (at grade 6) is vacant and

¹ In November 2018, Policy Committee members agreed to meet on 22 February 2019.

currently being filled. The WTO Young Professional (YP), Ms Onon Sukhbaatar from Mongolia, who currently supports the STDF, will leave the Secretariat by the end of the year. The STDF was not selected to benefit from WTO's YP program in 2019. The Secretariat also introduced a new intern, Ms Nora Dei-Anang, who joined the STDF team in October 2018 until the beginning of March 2019.

9 The Secretariat informed members that Mr Jens Andersson, STDF's M&E consultant, was no longer available for STDF work, while Ms Elena Immambocus, STDF's communications consultant, was unable to attend this Working Group meeting (due to the limited number of days remaining under her contract in 2018). Sweden suggested hiring another M&E consultant, on a needs basis, to support the STDF in 2019. Sweden also clarified that it would be able to provide more specific RBM support to assist the STDF in the development of a new strategy in 2019 (i.e. for 2020 and beyond).

10 The Secretariat summarized STDF's financial situation as of 30 September 2018. Contributions in 2018 (from Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States – both US FDA and USDA) totalled **US\$4,511,964**, i.e. nearly reaching STDF's annual target level funding of US\$5 million. Additional contributions in 2018 were expected from Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom under existing and new multi-annual contribution agreements. As of 30 September 2018, the STDF Trust Fund showed a positive balance of CHF519,762 or **US\$524,483**.

2.5 Implementation of STDF communication plan

- **STDF Website, briefing notes, e-news, etc.**

11 The Secretariat briefly highlighted STDF's main communication efforts since the March 2018 meeting. Two new STDF Briefing Notes were published on: (i) [Facilitating Safe Trade](#) (issued at the WTO workshop on "Control, Inspection and Approval Procedures", on the margins of the SPS Committee in July 2018); and (ii) [Environmental Protection](#) (issued on 29 October, during the STDF/SPS week). A new STDF film entitled "[How safe is Africa's Food](#)" ([STDF/PG/303](#)), produced by FAO in collaboration with WHO and the Centre Pasteur du Cameroun, was completed and will be made available on STDF's YouTube channel.² The Secretariat displayed various STDF materials at different events, including the WTO Public Forum. Five [news items](#) were issued to more than 4,000 subscribers to STDF's mailing list.

12 The Secretariat recalled the [Working Group survey](#) in December 2017, which highlighted the need to increase STDF's visibility and outreach at regional and national level. The chairperson encouraged members to identify further outreach opportunities.

- **Secretariat participation in external events**

13 The Secretariat gave a brief update on its participation in external events and meetings since the 2018 March meeting. An overview was provided in Annex 2 to the Annotated Agenda. Many events were attended in Geneva, or through Skype, reducing time and travel costs. External funding was received for the Secretariat's participation in some other meetings, which further reduced costs.

14 The chairperson encouraged participants to consider including presentations on the STDF in future events. The Secretariat drew attention to the new STDF [standard presentation](#), available on the STDF website.

- **Activities by STDF members**

15 Dr Msiska (developing country expert) highlighted the usefulness of STDF communication materials, particularly STDF films and information available on the website, for awareness raising and training purposes. The materials are used for different audiences, including plant health inspectors, the private sector and policymakers in Zambia and elsewhere. Dr Gnonlonfin (developing country expert) informed that during the latest ECOWAS Regional Harmonization Meeting in August 2018 experiences and lessons learned from STDF's work were shared.

16 The World Bank Group emphasized the convening role of the STDF, for instance in ensuring connections between SPS and Trade Facilitation activities. Examples included the WTO Public Forum

² The film was uploaded on 19 November 2018.

2018, various workshops on the margins of the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee, and the 10th Meeting of the TFA Working Group of the World Customs Organization (WCO).

2.6 STDF 2017 Annual Report

17 The Secretariat briefly introduced the [2017 Annual Report](#), released in June 2018, which profiles and links STDF's work to selected SDGs. The report, produced by the Secretariat with the support of STDF's communications consultant, aims to be more analytical and results-oriented. The selection of SDGs was based on work carried out or completed in 2017. It was noted that other SDGs could be profiled more in the future (e.g. SDG 3 on good health linked to STDF projects and PPGs on food safety that are nearing completion) if this format is maintained. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation to all members who contributed by: (i) sharing stories and examples of collaborative approaches; and (ii) disseminating the report widely through their networks.

18 The Working Group approved the report (in accordance with STDF Operational Rules), recognizing improvements to the content and layout. Several members appreciated the focus on specific SDGs and highlighted the usefulness of case stories and examples to support results-based reporting. Suggestions were offered to further improve future reports including through an increased emphasis on cross-cutting issues such as gender, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and improved reporting on results, based on final project reports and ex-post evaluations.

19 The Secretariat reminded members of the dual nature and audience of the STDF. Measuring the results and impact of STDF as a coordination platform and knowledge hub is complex. The ongoing external evaluation will benchmark the STDF to other similar mechanisms and platforms and may include recommendations and lessons learned to support future results measurement and reporting.

2.7 New STDF Work Plan (2019)

- **Presentation by the Secretariat**

20 The Secretariat introduced the draft [STDF Work Plan for 2019](#), i.e. the last year of the [Medium-Term Strategy \(2015-2019\)](#), and highlighted, in particular, the importance of continuing: (i) capitalizing on the potential of the Working Group; and (ii) identifying additional collaborative case stories depicting the broader impact of the STDF. The draft plan contains a new section on Communications and Outreach, as it underpins all the STDF's outputs, and includes a slightly higher budget for STDF's communications consultant. It also contains a section on development of the new STDF strategy in 2019. Meetings on strategy development are envisaged in March, June/July and October 2019, and would be facilitated by an external resource person. Up to 10 former and current developing country experts would be invited to participate in the June/July meeting.

21 The Secretariat explained that in view of ongoing and outstanding work, and the ongoing external evaluation, no new activities are planned in 2019. In terms of the new STDF film (i.e. an activity not implemented in 2017-2018 and carried over to 2019), the Secretariat suggested updating the "[Trading Safely](#)" film produced in 2008. This film is considered very useful by different stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries, but is becoming a bit outdated. The Secretariat also reminded members that the WTO may decide to hire additional staff for the STDF - on a temporary basis - due to the extremely high workload of the Secretariat.

22 Some members raised concerns about the lack of M&E support, which is key for capturing outcomes and impact stories, and requested a revision of the 2019 budget to include an external consultant, on a needs basis. Sweden reiterated its offer to provide an RBM consultant to support the STDF Secretariat in 2019, linked to development of the new STDF strategy.

23 Some partners noted that Table 1 (on risk assessment and mitigation) does not include potential mitigation strategies or actions to be followed by STDF members. The World Bank and the WTO emphasized that members are responsible for ensuring active participation in the Working Group. The WTO supported the development of the new STDF film, as proposed, based on new case stories, and highlighted the usefulness of the 2008 film in numerous WTO training activities. Norway commended the use of the SDGs as a framework for the 2017 Annual Report and suggested that a reference be made to the SDGs in the draft plan for 2019.

24 It was decided that the Secretariat will incorporate the comments received and circulate the 2019 Work Plan to members for their final approval.³

3 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AMONG PROVIDERS OF SPS CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIALOGUE AMONG RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS (OUTPUT 1)

3.1 Presentation by ICTSD and Australia on a study on Gender and SPS Measures

25 Dr Sarah Mohan briefly introduced the work of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and its new project entitled "New Thinking on Trade and Gender", funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Research under this project will feed into a background chapter in the upcoming WTO-World Bank Group report on gender and trade, and include a focus on gender in free trade agreements (FTAs) and national level capacity-building, amongst others. The study on Gender and SPS Measures is part of this broader effort. Australia expressed its support for the research, and highlighted its work on gender in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and in bilateral assistance programs.

26 The ICTSD consultant - Dr Spencer Henson – presented the study's preliminary findings and recommendations focused on gender inclusion in standards development, equivalence, capacity-building, and the need for a "gender assessment" of SPS measures, using a toolkit or indicator, which could flag measures that have significant gender issues. Dr Henson also explained that gender can be included as one of the decision criteria in STDF's P-IMA tool, which helps developing countries prioritize SPS investments. Gender could also be more rigorously evaluated in STDF projects, identifying and promoting good practice.

27 The World Bank Group viewed that the study provided a good rationale for gender mainstreaming in the SPS arena, notably in projects trying to target or assist female entrepreneurs in agri-food systems, and supported the call for further research. While SPS measures as such may be gender-neutral, this is not always the case for their implementation.

3.2 Presentation by the WTO on ongoing research work on Trade and Natural Disasters: an SPS perspective

28 Mr Michael Roberts (WTO) presented ongoing research examining the impact of natural disasters on trade, also funded by DFAT, focused on three countries: Dominica, Nepal and Vanuatu. In addition to tracking trade effects through global value chains, the research explores trade issues that arise in disaster response, recovery and resilience at country level. Mr Roberts provided examples of how disasters can act as a vector for the spread of pests and diseases. Other issues may arise in trade facilitation (i.e. long customs clearance for humanitarian relief or for the entry of rescue dogs). Re-establishment of economic activity after a disaster may carry the risk of importing SPS hazards. Trade measures, quarantine policies and customs procedures can be more restrictive than necessary to manage risks and limit economic opportunities in disaster recovery.

29 Australia expressed its support for the ongoing research, in view of the increase in the severity of natural disasters and the significance of the trade impacts. STDF's developing country experts shared their experiences in various disaster events. The World Bank Group referred to an ongoing study on El Niño and La Niña events in five Southeast Asian countries, focused on resilience and disaster preparedness. The FAO informed that recent reports show an increase in the rate of hunger and that climate change is one of the major contributing factors. The OIE briefed participants on its ongoing work on response preparedness and contingency planning, the OIE Guidelines on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health, and upcoming work on climate change.

30 The World Bank Group and the OIE agreed to further consult their colleagues and put them in contact with Mr Roberts. The World Bank Group also highlighted the role of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) and other global and regional partnerships in improving disaster preparedness, border cooperation, transparency and emergency arrangements. Natural disasters introduce a range of issues and responses that are "not fit for purpose" and solutions require a comprehensive government approach. Participants agreed to submit any further input to Mr Roberts - through the Secretariat - by 16 November 2018.

³ Members subsequently approved the 2019 Work Plan on 16 November 2018 (using a silent approval procedure).

3.3 Presentation by Mr Kees van der Meer on his study entitled "Developing National SPS Systems, Common Principles and Diverse Needs"

31 Mr Kees van der Meer (SPS expert, former World Bank Group staff and chair of the STDF Working Group) presented his study, which aims to promote good practice in the preparation of SPS action plans. His presentation focused on the challenges for developing countries in building SPS capacity, the key elements of a national SPS system, ways to develop such systems, the role of donors and the international community, and recommendations for preparing SPS action plans. He also requested members to reflect on the potential role the STDF could play in this area.

32 The FAO stressed that coordination in SPS technical assistance is crucial for the best use of resources, in line with a One Health approach considering the links between plant health, animal health, food safety and environmental impact. All players should understand the role of each agency. The World Bank Group highlighted that needs assessments tools (OIE-PVS, IPPC-PCE and FAO/WHO-food safety), including performance and capacity indicators, already exist. However, results are often not available in the public domain. It posed a general question on the usefulness of developing an SPS capacity index mechanism, using a sub-set of the criteria in existing assessment tools, putting in place a ratings system and aggregating the data. The European Commission highlighted the usefulness of the OIE-PVS pathway.

33 Questions were raised on specific examples of countries that have prepared and updated their national SPS action plans. The Secretariat clarified that countries interested in developing an SPS action plan can request funding from the STDF. It also reminded participants of past STDF work focused on identifying and applying indicators to measure the performance of SPS systems. The FAO informed that its Regional Office in Africa is currently developing specific food safety indicators and that a pilot for validation in selected countries is underway.

34 In response, Mr van der Meer named Moldova, Laos and Cambodia as countries that have updated SPS action plans to certain degrees, sometimes as part of broader trade assessments (e.g. EIF-DTIS). He recommended conducting an evaluation of the experiences in this area, as none currently exist. He also viewed that the existing needs assessment tools (i.e. OIE, IPPC, FAO/WHO) can serve as building blocks to make international comparable indicators, but not directly. The World Bank Group provided an update on its recent analysis of 93 OIE-PVS assessments, and considered that there is a lot of variation in the data, enough to make comparisons between countries, and clusters of countries, and to relate the data to outputs and outcomes. Further work on SPS indicators to measure the performance of SPS systems would be valuable. In addition, Mr van der Meer's study could consider gender aspects in SPS systems, as well as cross-border trade issues.

3.4 Structured exchanges between WG members and observers

- **Information about new/emerging SPS initiatives and issues - STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and observer organizations**

35 The Secretariat drew attention to a number of documents containing information on ongoing and/or planned SPS initiatives, including from [AU](#), [CABI](#), [COLEACP](#), [FAO](#), [ITC](#), [UNCTAD](#) and [UNIDO](#), as well as an [overview of relevant GEN documents](#) submitted to the WTO SPS Committee.

36 The WTO reported on the 5th Review of the SPS Agreement, launched in March 2018 by the SPS Committee. Proposals by members focused on, *inter alia*, transparency and national SPS coordination; use of third-party assurance schemes; recognition of disease- and pest-free areas; Fall Army Worm; and science as the basis for SPS measures. The SPS Committee will organize informal meetings on these topics in 2019. The WTO expressed its appreciation for the participation of Codex, OIE and IPPC and the World Bank Group in the WTO workshop on Annex C of the SPS Agreement in July 2018. The WTO also informed that the SPS e-learning course is being updated to include more interactive features, new training materials, and STDF projects as case studies. The WTO is coordinating a new publication with the OIE entitled "Ensuring Safe Trade in Animals and Animal Products, Negotiation Certification and Assurance Systems", to be published in April 2020.

37 The European Commission provided an update on the "Fit for Market" program, implemented by COLEACP, which recently benefited from an additional EC contribution of €15 million. The World Bank Group informed that GFSP is launching a study on food safety in Africa in December 2018 and thanked members for providing comments, and the STDF for serving as a valuable knowledge

exchange platform. The report will present recommendations on how to mobilize, target and coordinate public and private investments for food safety in Africa, mainly for domestic public health, but also for exports.

38 The FAO drew attention to an ongoing study on the level of harmonization with Codex MRLs, which is expected to reveal reasons behind the low level of harmonization in major markets and the potential trade impact of non-harmonization in developing countries. It also briefed participants on ongoing work on Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) in the food chain, new work on risk categorization approaches, new guidance material on risk-based food inspection, updates on the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool, and a new publication on "Technical Guidance for the Development of the Growing Area Aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes". Finally, the FAO announced the organization of [two International Food Safety Conferences](#) in 2019 in Addis Ababa (12-13 February) and in Geneva (23-24 April). These events are organized in close collaboration with the WHO, the WTO and the African Union Commission (AUC).

39 The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) provided updates on three Technical Working Groups, namely: (i) chemicals in food hygiene; (ii) hygienic design; and (iii) terrestrial animal and farmed sea food handling and food safety. Two GFSI local groups will be launched in Australia and New Zealand shortly. GFSI's local group for the United States and Canada will start work on e-commerce and food safety, which may lead into a global technical Working Group. The third GFSI Government to Business (G2B) meeting, on the margins of the GFSI Global Food Safety Conference in February 2019 in Nice, France, will include two expert workshops on: (i) data sharing and transparency; (ii) third-party assurance programs.

40 The United Kingdom (UK) shared information on the Commonwealth Standards program, which aims to build capacity on the effective use of standards and promote inter-Commonwealth trade. The program has a duration of two years and a budget of £5 million. Training and technical assistance will be provided to Uganda, Zambia, St. Lucia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Members who are operating in those countries were encouraged to contact the UK for further information.

41 The IPPC informed members that it had convened a meeting, on the margins of CPM 13, with African countries to stimulate further work on the STDF-funded wood packaging project ([STDF/PG/460](#)). It also mentioned that the manuals, guidelines and other resources to implement ISPMs, developed under project [STDF/PG/350](#) and previously available on IPPC's Phytosanitary Resources webpage, had been migrated to the general [IPPC website](#). The IPPC Implementation Committee (IC) will meet in November to review various phytosanitary projects, including the new STDF "Beyond Compliance" project ([STDF/PG/328](#)).

42 Michigan State University (MSU) highlighted the implementation of an ongoing US FDA-funded project in Viet Nam, which is assisting compliance with HACCP requirements and improvements in the catfish value chain for exports to the US and other markets. MSU is also implementing a project in Malawi, under USDA's "Food for Progress" (FFP) program, aiming to build capacity in horticulture value chains. A regional five-year project is underway in Georgia, focused on livestock and dairy value chains.

43 The World Bank Group referred to its work under the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) and informed members about a brainstorming session with other STDF partners, facilitated by the STDF on 31 October, on the development of an SPS/Trade Facilitation diagnostic toolkit. It also drew attention to a forthcoming workshop on Border Agency Cooperation on 14-16 November in Cape Town, South Africa, again facilitated by the STDF, bringing together customs and SPS border agencies of 12 SADC member states and involving the World Bank Group, WTO/TFAP, OIE, Codex, IPPC, WCO and other partners. A similar event is planned for CARICOM members in January 2019.

44 The International Trade Centre (ITC) provided an update on its support to Afghanistan in developing a National Export Strategy, which includes SPS and quality components, and in particular establishment of a management certification system and a food safety authority. In the STDF-funded project ([STDF/PG/486](#)) in Myanmar, focused on SPS compliance in the oilseed value chain, progress was made in the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and connecting farmers with international buyers. Members were encouraged to follow the project's [Facebook page](#). An STDF-funded feasibility study in Sri Lanka on five selected crops ([STDF/PPG/576](#)) is nearing completion. Implementation of an STDF-funded project in Tajikistan ([STDF/PG/447](#)) is ongoing, in close collaboration with the FAO.

45 UNCTAD drew attention to its NTM program, focused on transparency and data collection, with SPS compliance being a major component. It also highlighted its collaboration with ASEAN and the ALADI Secretariat. In addition, a new project will commence shortly in the Pacific to help nine small island states to implement the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER+), which includes SPS aspects.

- **Case stories of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative/regional approaches to SPS capacity building, facilitated by the STDF (indicator)**

46 Participants did not share any additional case stories.

4 IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE (OUTPUT 2)

Overview and discussion on ongoing/future STDF work:

4.1 Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA)

47 The Secretariat provided an update on work related to the P-IMA framework, including within PPGs in Tajikistan ([STDF/PPG/561](#)) and Madagascar ([STDF/PPG/575](#)). In Madagascar, the use of P-IMA has been considered useful to encourage public-private dialogue on SPS investment priorities, and a workshop is planned in the coming months to enable government agencies, international organizations, donors and the private sector to discuss the findings and follow-up.

48 It was noted that the regional project ([STDF/PG/606](#)) to use P-IMA to prioritize and mainstream SPS investments into larger financing plans in selected COMESA member states (expected to include Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda) is getting started. Discussions are ongoing with Trademark East Africa, which has developed a new SPS standards program, and planned with other STDF partners and donors in the region to discuss and identify ways to collaborate in this work.

4.2 Facilitating Safe Trade

49 The Secretariat recently presented on trade facilitation and SPS linkages in meetings on the margins of the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee, and in a TFA Working Group at the WCO. It had also facilitated discussions on border agency cooperation among STDF partners on the margins of Working group meetings, which had resulted in the organization of the first pilot workshop for selected SADC member states on 14-16 November in Cape Town, South Africa, mentioned above.

4.3 Good Regulatory Practice (GRP)

50 The Secretariat informed members that an external expert, Ms Ambra Gobena, was contracted to work on a GRP study, based on the terms of reference (TORs) which were developed in collaboration with STDF partners and other interested organizations. This study will document and analyse specific stories and examples of the use of GRPs by developing countries, in order to identify relevant good practices, lessons and recommendations. A small peer review group, comprising interested STDF partners, donors and the OECD, is providing guidance and oversight to this study. Background research is underway, to be followed by interviews with STDF partners and others, with a final draft expected by March 2019. Members were requested to share any resources, stories, best practices or case studies related to GRP that may be of interest. Linked to the ICTSD study on gender, the impact of SPS measures on gender would be considered in the context of the GRP work.

4.4 Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

51 The Secretariat referred to a short update with additional details on the scope and timeframe for future work on PPPs, building on previous discussions in the Working Group. This work will get started with an informal survey of WTO members and Codex Contact Points on the use of voluntary third-party assurance (TPA) programmes. The survey is linked to ongoing work within the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), as well as two new PPG applications from Central America and Africa ([STDF/PPG/665](#) and [STDF/PPG/682](#)). STDF partners will be consulted on the content of this survey, prior to its dissemination. The expectation is to share initial findings in 2019.

52 The Secretariat noted that the scope of the other planned work on PPPs, to begin in 2019, would be much broader. It would identify and disseminate new case stories of SPS-related PPPs in diverse areas (e.g. laboratories, inspection, etc.). The expectation is that the findings will be shared with the Working Group in 2020, as well as at a larger (global or regional) event. Suggestions, ideas and examples are welcomed and will be reflected in the work as it moves forward.

4.5 SPS indicators and the performance of SPS systems

53 The Secretariat invited members to reflect on previous STDF work on SPS indicators on the performance of national SPS systems, recalling that work on this subject had been paused at members' request, and on whether members would want to reactivate this work at some stage.

4.6 SPS capacity development and ICT technology

54 The Secretariat gave an overview of some of the ICT tools listed in the information note circulated to the Working Group. These included an app that uses machine learning, mobile devices for rapid diagnostic testing, wearable technology, and crowd-sourced information platforms. Many of these technologies are geared towards agricultural production but were included because they also have potential SPS components. The Secretariat noted that some of these ICT tools may cease to exist in the near term due to their start-up nature.

55 The Secretariat highlighted a technology called "Mobile Assay", which uses mobile devices to do rapid diagnostic testing for aflatoxins and malaria, among others. The Secretariat also pointed out "P-tracker", a customisable smartphone app for plant pest field surveillance, developed by the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and currently applied in an STDF project ([STDF/PG/432](#)). The STDF showcased both technologies at the [2018 WTO Public Forum](#). The Secretariat encouraged members to share other examples of ICT tools that are currently being used in the SPS area.

5 NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND PROJECT PROPOSALS (OUTPUT 3)

5.1 Overview of ongoing and completed PPGs

56 The Secretariat informed that a PPG exploring the feasibility of an SPS Platform in the Pacific ([STDF/PPG/461](#)) was almost completed and thanked members for their contributions. Additional comments could still be accommodated in the coming weeks. The WTO is planning an SPS training workshop in April 2019 for the Pacific, in collaboration with PIFS, which will be an opportunity to validate and disseminate the results of the study, and explore funding avenues. Australia expressed its appreciation for the Secretariat's engagement in this PPG and for the opportunity to provide comments. The UK referred to the Commonwealth Standards program to ensure synergies.

5.2 Presentation of new PPG applications not accepted for consideration

57 The Secretariat introduced the PPG applications not tabled for consideration by the Working Group and referred to document [STDF/WG/Oct18/Review](#). France expressed an interest to support and improve application STDF/PPG/673 entitled "IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation in Mongolia".

5.3 Consideration of new PPG applications

STDF/PPG/616: Supporting the establishment of a bee sanctuary in Niue

58 The Working Group approved this PPG and recommended that the TORs should further clarify the scope of the deliverables and revise the budget. Members also suggested improving the PPG by: (i) clarifying how to maximize the benefits of the Bee Sanctuary for local beekeepers and investing in their capacity building; (ii) assessing the bee health status and local beekeeping practices in Niue and investigating the effects, if any, of the proposed sanctuary on other insect populations, given Niue's unique ecosystem; and (iii) reaching out to concerned public and private stakeholders in Niue and the wider region, including in New Zealand, as well as possible donors and regional organizations like the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to identify synergies and possible support for the resulting project.

STDF/PPG/634: Asia Pesticide Residue Mitigation through the Promotion of Biopesticides

59 The Working Group approved this PPG, and agreed that the revised proposal took onboard the comments raised in the October 2017 meeting. Members acknowledged the role of the PPG in facilitating dialogue and collaboration on biopesticides among international, regional and national organizations, as well as with the private sector, and relevant development partners and donors. Attention was drawn to related work on biopesticides by COLEACP and the Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission, which may be interested in collaborating.

60 Members made some other recommendations regarding the work to be carried out under this PPG. These included the need to fully consider: how ISPMs are relevant to the export, shipment, import and release of bio-control agents, opportunities to review some of the particular government agencies to be involved (notably in Nepal), options to include other countries (e.g. Cambodia, Myanmar), and active engagement of the private sector.

STDF/PPG/665: Piloting the use of TPA Programmes to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade in Africa and STDF/PPG/682: Piloting the use of TPA Programmes to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade in Central America

61 Given the commonalities in these two applications, the Working Group considered them together. Several members welcomed these PPGs, which were seen as highly relevant for the future STDF work on PPPs, as well as the ongoing work within CCFICS. Members appreciated the public-private collaboration underpinning these applications, as well as the linkages to the regional Codex Coordinating Committees in Latin America and Africa, and some expressed an interest in contributing in-kind expertise to this work. Both PPGs were approved, with the Working Group agreeing to increase the budget for the Africa PPG to USD\$75,000 (as required), while recognizing options to achieve possible cost-savings.

62 Members also provided suggestions regarding the work to be carried out. Caution was raised that a certain level of national food safety capacity is needed to effectively make use of TPA programmes. In this regard, it was recommended that countries in Latin America with more robust food systems (such as Mexico) should be fully engaged as partners and beneficiaries in the resulting project. Other recommendations included the need to give adequate attention to national food safety legislation for data sharing under PPPs, the promotion of a consistent approach to the assessment of third-party certification schemes, identification of potential risks and clarification of the goals and deliverables of both PPGs.

63 The Secretariat noted the expectation to use these PPGs to develop two regional projects, which would be expected to have a similar approach and methodology, despite the different country contents and commodities/products of focus. Concerted efforts would be made to ensure synergies and linkages between these PPGs (and the resulting projects) moving forward. The Secretariat will develop TORs for both PPGs that address all the comments and suggestions provided by members, in consultation with interested STDF partners and other members.

STDF/PPG/676: Feasibility study for the export of honey from the Republic of Mauritius to EU

64 The Working Group did not approve this application. Members noted that the plan of activities and budget lacked adequate detail and clarity. Furthermore, they questioned how efficient it would be to invest in expanding laboratory testing capacity, even if it is proven to be feasible, given its comparatively low production level and narrow market access. Members suggested further consideration of GAP compliance, and the safe use of pesticides and antibiotics.

6 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AMONG PROVIDERS OF SPS CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIALOGUE AMONG RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS (OUPUT 1 CONTD.)**6.1 Presentation by the World Bank Group on a new study "The Safe Food Imperative: Accelerating Progress in Low- and Middle-Income Countries"**

65 Dr Steve Jaffee and Dr Spencer Henson highlighted the main findings and recommendations of the study, which aims to enhance the awareness of policymakers on the socioeconomic impacts of foodborne disease in low- and middle-income countries and to clarify the rationale for devoting greater policy attention and public resources in this field. They also suggested that the STDF in its

future work should consider: (i) paying more attention to import controls and their impact on domestic food safety; (ii) focusing on enhancing the spill-overs (or "co-benefits") of trade-related capacity-building, as the segregation of export and domestic market focused value chains is diminishing in middle-income countries; and (iii) investing in projects only if there is concrete financial commitment from governments to ensure national ownership.

66 The FAO and other members commended the World Bank Group for the study and for the various recommendations provided, including in relation to future STDF work.

6.2 STDF film produced under STDF/PG/303: "Total diet study for Sub-Saharan Africa"

67 The Working Group was shown a preview of "[How safe is Africa's food?](#)", a new short film produced under the regional Total Diet Study (TDS) project in four African countries ([STDF/PG/303](#)). FAO highlighted the importance of this project for public health and market access. The project will be completed by the end of 2018.

6.3 Presentation by Michigan State University on work carried out under STDF/PPG/535: "Spillover Effects of Export-Oriented SPS Technical Assistance on the Domestic Food Safety Situation"

68 Prof. Les Bourquin (MSU) presented key findings and recommendations from a study under [STDF/PPG/535](#), which aimed to identify positive and negative conditions likely to result in "spillover effects" on domestic food safety. These include sector-specific considerations, the nature of SPS technical assistance and institutional support and/or enabling environment. He highlighted the difficulty in identifying concrete evidence of spillovers, and the limited availability of SPS project documents in the public domain (most of the documents consulted in the study came from STDF projects). Future trade-related projects should pay attention to measuring spillovers in monitoring and evaluation. He also encouraged members to share more SPS project documents for inclusion in the [STDF Library](#).

69 Some members suggested that the terms "co-benefits" or "external effects" may improve understanding of the concept. Members generally agreed that future SPS projects should include specific indicators to measure these effects. The Secretariat noted that the STDF Operational Rules require that STDF project should consider spillovers on domestic food safety. It also proposed to prepare an STDF Briefing Note, summarizing and highlighting the key findings of the work under the PPG. The GFSI offered to further disseminate the results of this work through a GFSI blog.

7 SPS CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS IN SPECIFIC AREAS (OUTPUT 4)

7.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects

70 The Secretariat referred to document [STDF/WG/Oct18/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing projects.

7.2 Presentations of project applications not accepted for consideration

71 The Secretariat briefly introduced the project applications not accepted for consideration by the Working Group at this meeting (see [STDF/WG/Oct18/Review](#)).

7.3 Consideration of PG applications

STDF/PG/517: Strengthening the spice value chain in India and improving market access

72 The Working Group endorsed this application. Members agreed that the revised application was comprehensive, and largely addressed the comments made at the previous meeting. The revised application also has a clearer goal, objective, outputs and activities. The Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) had expressed an interest in being involved in the project.

STDF/PG/543: Enhancing the capacity of the Fruit and Vegetable Sector to comply with Phytosanitary requirements for export to EU, other high-end markets and regional markets

73 The Working Group endorsed this application. Among the various comments, members suggested that the project focus on specific fruits or vegetables and on the markets they want to export to. In this way, the specific import requirements would be known. It was also suggested that the project allows the possibility of conducting the study tour in Kenya instead of South Africa and that the cost recovery mechanism in terms of inspections be based on risk and the size of the exporter rather than having mandatory fees for all exports. The Dutch Embassy in Uganda had agreed to co-fund this project, which decreased the total amount of funds requested by the applicant.

STDF/PG/569: Enhancing capacity of Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable industry to implement GAP, GHP & HACCP

74 The Working Group endorsed this application. It recognized the project's value in strengthening food safety capacity in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) so they can continue to access regional markets, supporting the use of risk-based approaches in official food control and inspection activities, and complementing the government's initiative to upgrade infrastructure in SMEs. Members concurred with the Secretariat's review of this application, including the need to encourage collaboration and synergies between this project and other relevant activities in Kyrgyzstan, i.e., activities supported by the Codex Trust Fund, the EU, Germany and the US.

STDF/PG/566: Reduction of aflatoxin contamination in Burkina Faso maize

75 The Working Group endorsed this application. Suggestions were made to improve the clarity of certain activities, for instance in providing an indication of the aflatoxin levels targeted. It was also recommended to include a relevant authority in the study to examine agricultural practices throughout the maize value chain. With regards to sustainability, members sought clarification on how the management of databases will continue after completion of the project and in a similar vein, how the collection, storage and sharing of data will be maintained in the longer term. It was recommended that the project be implemented by the EIF National Implementation Unit, in close collaboration with the applicants.

STDF/PG/567: Establishment and maintenance of fruit production areas free and under low prevalence of fruit fly pests in southern Africa

76 The Working Group endorsed this application. It agreed that the proposal was technically sound and of particular interest given the dual country approach. However, some considered it to be a high-risk project but that if successful, it could serve as a useful model for future projects. One member also suggested the possibility of implementing the project in stages for better governance and monitoring, with intermediate results in between.

STDF/PG/626: Strengthening phytosanitary capacity in Nigeria for facilitating market access: Developing and integrating digital system for pest surveillance, pest reporting, export seed certification and traceability

77 The Working Group did not endorse this application. Members noted that Nigeria should improve its internal phytosanitary process before digitizing it. Several members also questioned the sustainability of these ICT tools without financial commitment from the government itself and noted that there may be higher priority interventions before embarking on developing these digital systems. One member suggested that Nigeria applies the IPPC PCE tool to help develop a phytosanitary strategy and establish priorities for capacity development.

STDF/PG/681: Improving institutional capacity in Colombia and Ecuador to mitigate trade barriers due to high cadmium levels in cacao

78 The Working Group did not endorse this application. Members agreed that the issue is highly sensitive for the applicant countries and needs an urgent and coordinated solution. However, they also noted shortcomings in the project document. Linkages and complementarity with national initiatives and other relevant bilateral donor programmes, including the STDF funded PPG: "Developing safe production practices for cocoa beans" ([STDF/PPG/577](#)), implemented by the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), should be ensured. The logical framework needs revision

to reflect a clear sequence of activities, expected results and objectives, and the budget needs to be adjusted. Members also suggested exploring co-funding options from bilateral donors and other interested programs and recommended that the application project be revised and resubmitted for consideration at a future meeting.

7.4 Decisions on prioritization and funding of new PG applications

79 In view of the limited resources available in the STDF trust fund, the Working Group prioritized STDF/PG/517 (India), STDF/PG/543 (Uganda), STDF/PG/569 (Kyrgyz Republic) and STDF/PG/566 (Burkina Faso) for STDF funding, in accordance with the criteria established in the STDF Operational Rules. The Working Group endorsed - but did not approve for funding - application STDF/PG/567 (Fruit Fly, Southern Africa). It encouraged the applicant to re-submit the proposal for consideration at the next meeting in March 2019, with a reduced budget.

80 Some members considered that the Working Group, in prioritizing projects in the future, should also take into account regional balance and the frequency of projects in beneficiary countries.

7.5 Evaluation of STDF Projects – Overview

81 The Secretariat briefly introduced the results of a recently concluded independent [ex-post evaluation](#) of project [STDF/PG/336](#): "Strengthening the control of transboundary animal diseases". The project resulted in the elaboration of four national strategic plans to control four selected animal diseases. However, the evaluation noted that these plans had not (yet) translated into operational plans. It was also recommended, *inter alia*, that ex-post evaluations should be conducted at an earlier stage to allow for immediate follow-up actions (i.e. this evaluation was conducted three years after project completion) that projects could include a mid-term evaluation of projects, so that adjustments can be made during implementation.

82 The Secretariat informed members that consideration is being given to organize an information session on the results and impact of the project next year, in close collaboration with FAO which was responsible for its implementation. The IPPC noted that conducting mid-term evaluations can be an immense undertaking, and suggested that evaluations should be built into the project monitoring framework. The Secretariat explained that all STDF projects include an end-of-project evaluation. In addition, the Working Group selects at least two projects every year for an external impact evaluation, normally to be conducted two to three years after their completion.

8 OTHER BUSINESS

83 The Secretariat reminded members of the deadline of 16 November 2018 for: (i) submission of recommendations of new developing country experts; and (ii) provision of additional information and comments on WTO's work on Trade and Natural Disasters. Members were also informed that the next Working Group meeting will be held on 12-13 March 2019. An additional day (14 March) will be reserved (members only) to discuss the development of a new strategy for the STDF for 2020 and beyond.

84 The Secretariat, on behalf of the Working Group, thanked the outgoing chairperson, Mr Paolo Garzotti (EU), and also the outgoing developing country experts, Dr Msiska, Dr Kamarudin and Ms Paultre, for their services. Finally, the Secretariat mentioned that all the presentations, as well as the information documents submitted by members and observer organizations prior to the meeting, will be made available on the [STDF website](#).

9 CLOSURE

85 The meeting was closed at 17:00.

ANNEX 1

**STDF WORKING GROUP
29 – 30 OCTOBER 2018**

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