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Building a safer world through data exchange



We live in a globalised world. After ten years of crises (9/11, global financial crises, European economic crises) the world has changed more than during the last one hundred years. Globalisation brings the global village closer together and the world trade is the key to recovery from the financial crises and to

increased development of our societies. History has proven that trade is the key to development. However to boost trade developments further we need to enhance the international supply chain through harmonisation and increased exchange of information. Today we have international standards to achieve this and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the so called BALI package, could be the vehicle to take a leap forward providing increased speed and predictability for international trade.

Traditionally there has been a view that security and trade facilitation are different sides of the same coin and increasing one of them would at the same time decrease the other. We now know that this is not true. They are the same. A good and efficient process for international trade is always a good process for all stakeholders, both government and private sector. A secure process is easy to facilitate

“We need to enhance the international supply chain through harmonisation...”

and a simple process is easier to secure.

What we now need is implementation. International institutions, like the World Customs organization, World Bank and others, have capacity building programmes and funding to change the world in this perspective. However to become more efficient in implementation of international standards we need a new paradigm for exchange of data. In the past this was partly a question on how to do it, meaning issues such as lack of harmonisation of data elements, what technology to use, cost for developments etc. Today, these questions have been answered and we are instead down to one single obstacle, is there political will to exchange information, including nominal real commercial data in real time? If we can answer this question we can create a new paradigm for global trade.

So how can we increase data exchange between the stakeholders in the supply chain? As mentioned, technology is not a challenge anymore. Instruments to achieve a better information exchange already exist. We need to utilise the commercial data available through the cloud using big data solutions in a transparent and secure way. If we can find a solution where an independent international institution, supported by other influential international organisations, takes the responsibility for the security of the data through multilateral agreements, I am convinced that the technology of today can answer the questions of tomorrow. There are solutions to protect the integrity of big data on the market already today.

If government agencies in a more consistent manner could access information for their risk management operations from the various stakeholders of the supply chain, using global mod-

els like the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes, then we could revolutionise the speed and predictability for the legitimate private sector while at the same time improve security and safety of our societies.

This is in my mind not a dream, but a reality. We have a choice to use the momentum of the WTO TFA and the development of international standards for the movement of goods, to create a new and better platform for the next 25 years of world trade, through increased exchange of information using the opportunities of new technology.

Is the private sector ready and willing to participate in an initiative like this? I am convinced that they are. The data and systems needed already exist and are in use by multilateral companies in the private sector. If that data could be protected in a feasible manner and used in a transparent and structured way to increase predictability and speed of the super-highways of global trade, the private sector would be delighted and willing to participate.

It is time to connect for increased prosperity, and it is time to start the dialogue about how to create a practical way forward to results in this respect, meaning a new paradigm for information exchange in the world of global trade.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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