



# STRENGTHENING THE TPO NETWORK

## PLENARY – WHAT NEXT FOR THE NETWORK? OBJECTIVES AND OPTIONS FOR THE TPO NETWORK

FRIDAY 15 OCTOBER 2010

### Speakers:

- Mr. Ricardo ESTRADA, CEO, CORPEI
- Mr. Ivan JUKL Managing Director, CzechTrade

Moderator: Mr. John GILLIES, Senior Officer, TS/DBIS, ITC

Participants debated on how best to strengthen the TPO Network and how to sustain activities between the bi-annual TPO Network World Conference and Awards. Currently, there is a patchwork of Networks of TPOs operating in diverse geographical regions. Participants focused on how to identify practical ways to strengthen the capacities of the global network as well as regional networks and how to sustain network activities between biennial meetings.

Mr. John Gilles noted that regional network architectures are still evolving to meet the needs of their members. “These differences are also evident across the global ‘network of networks’, with implications for network governance structures, programme development, service delivery and performance monitoring,” he explained. “The need to prove relevance and value to stakeholders has been an overarching theme for this conference. Organizational architecture matters for export promotion. This can said for TPOs and for the network itself.”

Mr. Richard Estrada described the evolution of REDIBERO, the Ibero-American Network of TPOs, which was launched in 1999. The network has a revolving chair and an associative structure. WAIPA – the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies – is different in that it has an affiliation fee and a formal structure.

“It’s important to discuss whether or not we need another network. Some people don’t have the time to participate and there are many existing networks, including ITC’s World Export Development Forum,” he pointed out.

Mr. Estrada asked participants to consider the following questions:

- Why do we need to create or to participate in a new network?
- What value added can I provide or receive? Some will benefit more than others but all should benefit.
- Do I have the time to participate?
- Do I have the resources? There is a cost of participating in the events of the networks. Can we invest in all events or do I have to focus?

- Are our regional and intra-regional networks working? If not, should we get involved in something bigger and more complex?
- Should we first strengthen the Regional Networks? If there are not regional networks, should we create them first?
- Should it become a network of networks?
- How do we integrate all members of each network?

Mr. Estrada then asked participants to consider the structure, membership and possible actions for a new network – benchmarking, best practices, lessons learned, training workshops, seminar, support and consultancy work. He suggested, “as the guiding light of the TPO Network, ITC’s role could be that of a permanent chair.

Mr. Ivan Jukl agreed with Mr. Estrada’s proposal that a new network be comprised of the CEOs of existing national, sub-regional and regional TPOs. “If we go with CEOs we can make decisions at the conference. We also then have a chance to create a prestigious and relevant think tank. The higher the level of conference, the higher prestige you have,” he said.

Mr. Jukl told participants that CzechTrade would like to see a working group of experts. “This works very well in the European TPO Network,” he said. “We are satisfied with current set up of TPOs, but the most important thing is commitment. If we have committed partners we can be sure members will participate in activities throughout the year and we can contribute to events not only by hosting, but by providing expertise.”

Tatiana Lipovetskaia Palermo, International Relations Coordinator for Apex-Brasil, which holds the rotating presidency of both REDIBERO and WAIPA, described the differences between the two in terms of structure and governance. “It is difficult to say whether it is better to have a formal structure. REDIBERO has an information structure, but the level of emotional commitment among the members is so great that we are doing quite well,” she said.

Han Meiqing, Deputy-Director General of CCPIT’s Department of International Trade, explained that the networks across China came together organically in response to specific regional needs. “Our strategy to deal with the issues we are discussing here is that we use flexibility to solve problems. We do not have the strategies to deal with our diversified networks. Given China’s 30 regional administrations, we have to use the TPOs’ adaptability, which is the key to our survival,” he said.

In response to a question regarding the need to give African countries more support to meet the challenges faced by exporters of raw materials, Ms. Aicha Pouye, Director of ITC’s Division of Business and Institutional Support, responded: “Africa must take charge and identify what support it needs. Numerous organizations and associations exist across the continent, but participation is low.”

There has also been interest expressed to create networks to link MENA countries as well as to bring together Eastern Europe and Asia.

Mr. Gillies asked participants to consider how the TPO Network should develop between now and the next conference in 2012. He proposed a Working Group be struck. Participants gave ITC a mandate to establish a small Working Group under an informal advisory board comprised of the 2010 TPO World Network Award Winners – Mauritius, Brazil and the UK. Apex-Brasil supported the proposal for the Working Group.

ITC will send out a draft terms of reference to TPO Network members for their input. The terms of reference will develop options for network governance and a draft work plan to be presented in the context of upcoming regional network meetings attended by the Working Group. TPO Network members were asked to advise ITC of any regional events or technical meetings and Annual General Meetings to enable the Working Group to roll out activities between now and the next TPO Network World Conference and Awards in 2012.