

# **AFTER BALI: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WITH ASIAN TRADE FACILITATION?**

*Deborah Elms\**

## **ABSTRACT**

*The 2013 Bali agreement on trade facilitation was hailed as a breakthrough. It represented the first time the World Trade Organization members successfully concluded negotiating a multilateral trade agreement among its members. But there is a lack of understanding of what is contained within the agreement among many of the individuals commenting on the deal, as well as across many of the member state officials charged with implementation. This paper explores the content of the agreement and then considers how Bali will actually alter the situation of trade facilitation on the ground. At this time, it is difficult to predict what Bali might mean for companies, because the agreement itself has so many flexibilities. Since every WTO member could potentially implement the deal differently, it will be hard to know precisely how countries or companies might benefit, especially for goods crossing into developing countries — thus leading to ongoing, challenging conditions for some time to come.*

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