uncertainties still surrounding Blockchain are addressed. Should this be the case, the trade finance landscape could well look very different in the future. Interestingly, some observers believe that, while Blockchain has been intimately linked to finance since its inception, the technology has a better chance of first leaving its mark in areas like trade facilitation, where coordination of multiple actors remains a real hurdle, or in issues related to traceability (see Section 4.2(a)).

(b) Trade facilitation in action

Over the past few years, trade facilitation has become a key focus of trade policy. Not without reason: inefficient border procedures continue to impose significant costs on businesses – and ultimately on consumers and the economy as a whole. Blockchain is seen by many as an opportunity to facilitate trade procedures and accelerate the digitalization of cross-border trade.

While tariffs accounted for 9 per cent on average in 2013 (WTO, 2015a), a 2015 WTO study found that trade costs can amount to a 134 per cent *ad valorem* tariff on a product in high-income countries and to a 219 per cent tariff in developing countries (WTO, 2015c). In a large part, these costs are the consequence of paperwork and of the number of agencies involved in border procedures, resulting in burdensome customs procedures. Beyond customs, multiple government agencies responsible for health, food, quarantine, safety, and consumer protection traditionally intervene in customs procedures. A survey-based study found that the median number of government agencies directly involved in cross-border transactions is 15, and can reach 30 in some cases (Choi, 2011). The number of actors involved leads to complex and often duplicative administrative procedures. It is therefore critical to simplify paperwork and to streamline and automate procedures, which explains the growing importance attached to trade facilitation measures – i.e. the simplification of import, export and transit procedures – which led to the negotiation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

The TFA, which was adopted at the Ninth Ministerial Conference in Bali in December 2013 and entered into force in February 2017, aims at facilitating the release and clearance of goods, enhancing transparency, and promoting cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues, including through the use of electronic means to exchange data and documents related to cross-border trade transactions.

Although trade facilitation is a problem for all trading nations, it is particularly important for developing countries. The latter are expected to gain the most from more efficient customs procedures. According to WTO estimates, the full implementation of the TFA could reduce global trade costs by an average of