

Speech for Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, UNECE

Event: UN/CEFACT 1st meeting of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies

Date/Time: 30 January 2020 @ 10:00

Place: Palais, Salle XXVI in the E-building

(Your Excellency,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear experts,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to this first meeting of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies in Trade and Transport.

Innovation and technology are key to connecting governments, organizations, businesses, people and indeed even things. They are a main driver for global growth and help streamline Infrastructure, Knowledge Management and Collaboration. Thus, Smart Connectivity has been a major axis of UNECE's work to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, whether it be the policy recommendations and guidelines in order to ensure that all parties are using a commonly agreed framework, or the standards and tools creating the technical level links to allow parties to connect.

Advanced technologies such as Blockchain, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning are all very interesting innovations which could change how we work in the future. In light of this, the guidance of this Advisory Group can be essential in defining the way forward, both on a policies and standards.

But there are other levels which I would like you to consider within your exchanges: sustainability and responsibility.

Keep in mind the overarching Sustainable Development Goals and how these technologies will contribute to achieving these goals. I understand

that UN/CEFACT has already produced a good deal of guidance on this topic. This should remain a major theme to pursue during your debates. It is not just about how technology can assist to improve procedures; it should also be about how technology can help us to achieve a sustainable and inclusive environment which leaves no one behind.

There are already many examples, such as

- the use of Blockchain in refugee camps in Jordan to help distribute aid;
- the use of drones (and indeed sometimes autonomous drones) to bring much needed medical supplies to remote areas;
- the use of Internet of Things-technologies to help identify fraudulent activities.

Another key point to keep in mind is responsibility. The UN Secretary-General recently spoke to the UN General Assembly and underlined the “Dark side of the digital world.” New technologies may have wonderful applications with good intentions, but we must not ignore that there will be those who will try to use them for fraudulent purposes. New technologies are being abused to commit crime, incite hate, invade privacy, exploit people. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is having unpredictable consequences on labour markets and the very structure of society. And lethal autonomous weapons have the ability to kill people without human judgement and accountability.

The UN is the major platform to enable governments, civil society and the private sector to come together and establish red lines and rules. Your future reflexions should take into consideration these aspects and propose ways in which such diversions of new technology might be avoided through policy recommendations or guidance.

Digital technology provides unprecedented opportunities and challenges. UN/CEFACT prides itself on keeping up with new technology trends and the pursuit of developing an inclusive digital economy.

I hope that this meeting will be informative for all of us, so we can understand how these advanced technologies may impact trade and how to design policies to maximize the gains.

I wish you a fruitful meeting and look forward to the results.

Thank you.