

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC  
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**



**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**UNECE/UNESCAP Workshop on United Nations electronic Documents (UNeDocs)  
for Single Window Facilities in Asia and the Pacific  
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Bangkok, Thailand**

**organized under the**

**Interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine of growth through knowledge  
management and information and communications technologies  
(4<sup>th</sup> Tranche of the UN Development Account)**

**Recommendation to establish a  
UNITED NATIONS ELECTRONIC TRADE DOCUMENTS NETWORK  
OF EXPERTS IN ASIA PACIFIC**

Discussion paper<sup>1</sup>

This document was developed by the organizers of the workshop. It is intended for discussion and review by the participants of the workshop.

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## **1. Mandate**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) Resolution 62/6 requests the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with regional and global partners to provide technical assistance to UNESCAP members in order to increase their human and institutional capacity “to formulate and implement trade facilitation and e-commerce practices for enhancing international competitiveness”. Furthermore, the UNESCAP Resolution 63/5 requests the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with regional and global partners “to strengthen capacity-building activities for governments agencies of landlocked and transit countries in the field of trade facilitation in order to establish transparent, consistent and predictable environment for conducting international trade” and “to assist landlocked and transit countries in their efforts to streamline, simplify and standardize documents and trade procedures, so as to reduce trade transaction costs”.

2. In addition to the mandate above, the UNESCAP Committee for Managing Globalization, at its session in September 2007, identified trade facilitation and e-commerce among those areas, where developing countries needed assistance and requested secretariat to address their needs in cooperation with other international organizations.

3. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Trade supports the UN Development Account project “Interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine of growth through knowledge management and information and communications technologies” which promotes global standards and best practice developed by UNECE. UNECE cooperates with the other UN Regional Commissions to build a critical mass of knowledge on trade facilitation to ensure that international trade is carried out as efficiently as possible.

### **The UNECE’s and UNESCAP’s perspective on paperless trade**

4. As a part of national facilitation strategies, electronic single window and paperless trade systems are being initiated in a number of developing and transitional countries in the UNESCAP and UNECE region, including India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, the Russian Federation and ASEAN countries.

5. With the progress made in introducing an ASEAN Single Window and other closely related initiatives in the ten nations in Southeast Asia, as well as with APEC launching its Trade Facilitation Action Plan Phase II, which explores paperless trade implementation even further, the Asia Pacific region has much to offer. At the subregional level, the ASEAN Single Window initiative belongs to the most prominent initiatives facilitating cross-border trade through an ICT-based one-stop solution for logging and exchanging trade data. At the national level, similar initiatives include TradeNet in Singapore, Dagang Net in Malaysia, KTNET in the Republic of Korea, TradeLink in Hong Kong,

China, eCert initiative in Australia and eManifest in Vietnam<sup>2</sup>. The eManifest is based on the APEC Framework for Secure Trade and the system uses advanced electronic information to identify high-risk shipments and will enable the Vietnam Customs to provide timely clearance of express deliveries.

6. The UNECE and UNESCAP have successfully developed a range of trade facilitation tools and conducted workshops and trainings for experts in the Asia Pacific region. Through this cooperation, both regional commissions exploit the synergies in bringing together highly specialized know-how and regional expertise in areas of trade facilitation and eBusiness.

#### **4. Standards and tools**

7. The UNECE has over 50 years of experience in developing standards and best practices for the facilitation of global trade. UNECE coordinates the development of standards with other UN agencies and international organizations such as the International Standards Organization (ISO), the Federation of International Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). UNECE instruments include the Transport Routier International (TIR) and the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) Convention, the United Nations Layout Key (UNLK; ISO 6422) for the simplification of trade documents, UN/EDIFACT for electronic Data Exchange of Trade documents and UN Recommendation 33 on establishing Single Windows (Recommendation 33).

8. UNECE, through its Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (CEFACT) has now released the United Nations electronic Trade Documents (UNeDocs) solution, which is ready for implementation verification. UNeDocs trade documents can be implemented either in a traditional paper format or as electronic documents<sup>3</sup> depending on the needs and capabilities of the user. They incorporate a new generation of technology and standards designed to provide an Internet based platform on which electronic single window and paperless trade environments can be built. In addition, they are fully backwards compatible with existing document standards and support the gradual migration from paper to electronic document processing. In the Asia Pacific region, these standards are supported and promoted through UNESCAP as well as the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT).

9. These new standards are highly innovative and incorporate the latest technology and know-how. Skilled human resources are critical to the successful implementation of e-single windows and paperless trade. These implementations require a pool of local experts with specific, high-level technical knowledge and experience in specialized tools for paperless trade.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in the latter case, Vietnam has benefited from the implementation of eManifest at the Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City airports through eliminating numerous hours of processing time for the nearly 10,000 air-express packages entering Vietnam each day.

<sup>3</sup> UNeDocs electronic documents can be implemented in EDIFACT or XML syntax

### **Recommendation to establish a network of Experts in Asia Pacific**

10. To build up this critical expertise at the national and regional level, a supporting network is needed to gather and support these experts. This network should provide training, diffuse know how, support and exchange experience with peers. In that network UNESCAP would provide the regional outreach and advocacy and UNECE the knowledge and technical capacity for standards and tools for trade facilitation and e-business. It is expected that the 6<sup>th</sup> Tranche of the UN Development Account<sup>4</sup> will promote the establishment and functioning of the network.

11. To that end it is recommended to the UNECE Committee on Trade and the UNESCAP Committee on Managing Globalization that they support the establishment of a network of experts, called *the United Nations Network of Experts of Trade Facilitation (UN NeXT)* for the Asia-Pacific region. This network will support UNESCAP member countries in the Asia and Pacific region including UNECE member countries with economies in transition in Central Asia. A special attention will be given to least-developed, landlocked and transitional countries and small island economies. The mission of this network of experts is to provide the technical capacity for the implementation of single window facilities and paperless trade in the Asia Pacific region.

12. Participants in the Workshop are invited to consider and discuss this recommendation.

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<sup>4</sup> Development Account Project *Enhancing trade competitiveness of selected LDCs and countries in transition in South, Southeast and Central Asia through the implementation of Single Window facilities*: This project will be implemented by UNESCAP and UNECE with support of UNCTAD in the period of 2008-2009.