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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

### **Committee on Trade**

#### **Sixth session**

10-12 February 2014

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

#### **Programme of Work**

### **Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration**

#### **Eighth session**

12-14 February 2014

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

#### **Programme of Work and Draft Strategic Framework**

# **Overview of the UNECE Committee on Trade and Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration**

## **Note by the Secretariat**

### *Summary*

This background note presents an overview of the UNECE Committee on Trade (CT) and Committee on Economic Integration (CECI).

It is submitted by the secretariat for information to support the discussion on synergies between the two Committees that will take place in both Committee sessions in response to paragraph 31 (g) of the Outcome document of the Review of the 2005 Reform, where member States, “Agreed that the Trade Committee and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration will, from 2013 onwards, organize their two-day annual meetings, back to back, in the same week. Member States agree in principle that both Committees should further synergize their work. The secretariat is invited to draw up a report by the summer of 2014 so as to allow EXCOM to take a decision, before 1 December 2014, on whether or not to merge the two Committees.”

## **I. Committee on Trade**

### **Vision**

1. An open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading system<sup>1</sup> supported by: international standards; simple, transparent and effective processes; and harmonized product regulations.

### **Mission Statement/Mandate**

2. The Committee on Trade develops and promotes international norms and standards, effective procedures and best practices to facilitate the movement of goods and services<sup>2</sup>. It also promotes the convergence or harmonization of regulatory environments. In its work, it takes into account the needs of Governments, the private sector, consumers and civil society. It contributes to the integration and sustainable development of the UNECE region.

### **Mode of Operation**

3. To achieve its objectives, the Committee:

- Serves as a platform for policy dialogue, the exchange of experience and good practices;
- Develops guidelines and policy recommendations for Governments;
- Provides demand-driven policy advice and capacity building in its mandated areas;
- Oversees UNECE's work on regulatory cooperation and standardization policies and on agricultural quality standards.

### **Subsidiary Bodies**

4. Currently, the Committee has two subsidiary bodies, the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).

5. WP.6 is a forum for dialogue among regulators and policy makers. The participants discuss technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment, metrology, market surveillance and risk management. The Working Party makes recommendations that promote regulatory policies to protect the health and safety of consumers and workers, and preserve our natural environment, without creating unnecessary barriers to trade and investment. Their recommendations are non-binding, and are widely implemented in the UNECE member States and beyond.

6. WP.7 develops global agricultural quality standards to facilitate international trade. The standards encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and

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<sup>1</sup> Target 8.A “ Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system” of Millennium Development Goal 8 “Develop a Global Partnership for Development”.

<sup>2</sup> 2014-2015 Strategic Framework of Subprogramme 6 Trade.

protect consumer interests. UNECE standards are used internationally by Governments, producers, traders, importers, exporters and international organizations. They cover a wide spectrum of agricultural products: fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes, meat, cut flowers, eggs and egg products.

7. In the past, the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) also reported to the Committee on Trade. It currently reports directly to UNECE's Executive Committee, which will make a final decision about its reporting at the end of 2014. Regardless, the Committee keeps informed of UN/CEFACT's work in the areas of trade facilitation and electronic business because these areas can make an important contribution to the discussions on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade under the Committee.

### **Committee Work**

8. Directly under the Committee there are activities that support implementation of the recommendations, standards, best practices and tools developed by the different intergovernmental bodies under the Trade subprogramme. These include:

- a) The development and maintenance of prioritized lists of actions to improve national trade environments in the form of Aid-for-Trade action matrices. This work is done in consultation with national authorities and in close cooperation with UNDP country offices.
- b) National studies of procedural and regulatory barriers to trade, including recommendations for addressing these barriers.
- c) The organization of discussions and workshops on how to address identified issues.

## **II. Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration**

### **Objective/Mandate**

9. The Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (CECI) promotes a policy, financial and regulatory environment more conducive to economic growth, innovative development and higher competitiveness of enterprises and economic activities in the ECE region<sup>3</sup>.

### **Mode of Operation**

10. To achieve its objectives, the Committee<sup>4</sup>:
- a) Serves as a platform for policy dialogue, the exchange of experience and good practices;
  - b) Develops guidelines and policy recommendations for Governments; and

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<sup>3</sup> 2014-2015 Strategic Framework of Subprogramme 4 Economic Cooperation and Integration

<sup>4</sup> Report of the first session of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, ECE/CECI/2006/2

- c) Provides demand-driven policy advice and capacity building in the mandated areas.

### **Subsidiary Bodies**

11. Currently, the Committee has two subsidiary bodies, the *Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies*, and the *Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)*. The former focuses on policies to facilitate the generation, adoption and dissemination of innovations, whereas the latter focuses on creating the infrastructure necessary for innovative development and international competitiveness.

12. In particular, the *Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies* addresses national innovation systems and policies, innovative entrepreneurship and enterprise development, and the financing of innovative activities. It does so by<sup>5</sup>:

- a) Organizing international policy dialogues with the aim of identifying international good practices and policy recommendations;
- b) Preparing synopses of good practices and policy recommendations for discussion and endorsement by CECI and broad dissemination;
- c) Carrying out assessments of national innovation systems and policies (“Innovation Performance Reviews”) leading to peer-reviewed policy recommendations to improve national innovation performance;
- d) Providing advice on the implementation of policy reforms;
- e) Organizing technical assistance and capacity-building activities on a national and a sub-regional basis.

13. The *Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships* facilitates the exchange of practical experience on public-private partnerships (PPPs) and builds the capacity of public and private sector officials for implementing PPPs. It also prepares policy recommendations for consideration and possible adoption by CECI. Under the auspices of this Team, an International PPP Center of Excellence has been created which explores the best types of international Public-Private Partnership projects and assists countries worldwide, not only in the ECE region, in implementing such projects. The International Center of Excellence serves as a hub for a network of National Specialist PPP Centers, which focus on PPPs in selected sectors such as health, water, ICT infrastructure, schools, or green technologies.

14. In addition, the Team of Specialists has recently established a Business Advisory Group which will provide advice, to those countries who request it, on specific PPP issues.

### **Committee Work**

The Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration:

- a) Organizes thematic discussions on policy issues of common concern to those working on Innovation, Competitiveness and PPPs. Results from these discussions are then summarized and published as guidelines or best practices for member States. Examples of such discussions include:

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<sup>5</sup> Report of the sixth session of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, ECE/CECI/ICP/2013/2

- 2014 - The emerging landscape for innovation and PPP financing
  - 2012 - Exploring PPP options to renovate buildings: a review of best practices and their applicability for the Palais des Nations.
  - 2011 – Policy options to foster the financing and development of clean technologies.
- b) Organized regional discussions where the results of national innovation performance reviews can be discussed at a regional and peer level. Over the last three years, the following studies were discussed.
- 2014 - Armenia
  - 2012 - Ukraine
  - 2011 - Kazakhstan
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