

Concept Note

One of the basic principle of a single window as outlined in UNECE Recommendation 33 is that if the data is transmitted electronically, then it should only be transmitted once. This does not imply that all information must be submitted simultaneously, but information should not be requested multiple times.

Implementations of single windows around the world have shown that it is rarely a big-bang approach with all government agencies being incorporated into an electronic system from the outset. To the contrary, it is often a phased approach where some of the key agencies collaborate in the early stages and other agencies are brought on board progressively. This transitional period can result in some data being repeated between these other agencies not yet within the single window environment and the single window platform itself.

When moving from a paper-based process towards an electronic exchange of information, it is often tempting to create electronic versions of the paper documents. This is, of course, an advancement towards paperless trading; however, it may not be in the spirit of UNECE Recommendation 34 on "Data Harmonization and Standardization." This recommendation counsels us to compare the data requirements and the underlying business processes in order to not only dematerialize the exchange, but also to streamline it. After all, implementing a single window is not about the electronic system that will be put in place, but rather the trade facilitation mechanisms that this can offer.

That being said, there are justifiable reasons why certain paper documents are being presented as stand-alone electronic documents. Some of these are governed by conventions, for example, that require that the same sender provide the information and attest to its authenticity. If the information is combined with data from multiple sources and without a clear engagement on the part of the declarant, it is not deemed acceptable. It can also be a challenge for non-technical diplomats to understand electronic data exchanges unless they are seeing it in a format that resembles the paper documents to which they are accustomed.

Furthermore, a centralized single window approach may not be adapted to some countries whose first priorities are not necessarily trade facilitation, but rather combatting illicit activities, for example. A single window for expediting trade at the border may only be secondary for some countries who need to reduce criminality or ensure stable revenue collection. Engaging the regulatory agencies concerned may be a challenge when the agenda of the government might prefer to concentrate on controls, for example.

Authentication of information can be a further issue, creating a framework where the data is acceptable in a court of law in the case of litigation. Though not all information requires high level authentication methodologies, as outlined in UNECE Recommendation 14 and UNCITRAL work on the subject, some international conventions for example require a signature to authenticate the information.

Some of the key questions that this conference will aim to address include:

- What is the relationship between dematerialized documents and single window?
- Is information being repeated in electronic format and if so, for what reasons?
- Is there a reason that a 'document' must be presented in its integrity (i.e. a convention)? Would an approach allowing for multiple source of the data be acceptable in this case?
- Are there government-based approaches that favor a method other than the classical UNECE Recommendation 33 approach to single window? What are these and how are they incompatible with the UNECE approach/definition?
- What are the authentication requirements?
- Are the electronic authentication methods more restrictive than the paper-based requirements? For what reasons?

23 April 2018

14:00 – 14:10 Welcome Address

- Ivonne Higuero, UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division Director
- Princesse Estelle Igwe, Vice Chair of UN/CEFACT

14:10 - 14:25 – Keynote address

- Ambassador Daniyar Mukashev, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations and Other International Organization in Geneva

14:25 - 15:30 – Round Table 1

Initiatives on dematerializing cross-border document exchange

- Mats Wicktor, Swedish Customs, “Dematerialization within the NSW”
- Ibrahima Diagne, Gainde2000, “Dematerializing Documents and the NSW”
- Kaye Cheri, Conex, “Information exchange through the Data Pipeline principle”
- Tom Butterly, TDAF Consulting, “Developing a Business Model for the FAO ePhyto Certificate”
- UNECE Transport Division, “Dematerialization of Transport Documents”

COFFEE BREAK

16:00 - 16:30 Round Table 2

Achieving legally significant data exchange that stands in court

- Aleksandr Sazonov, EEC, “Common trust infrastructure for trading support data exchange”
- Markus Pikart, CITES, “Equivalent of physical signatures and seals in CITES electronic permits and certificates”

16:30 - 17:15 Debate

Key challenges and fundamental requirements

- Aleksei Bondarenko, UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain Coordinator – Moderator

17:15 - 17:30 Conclusions

- Lance Thompson, UNECE secretariat, UN/CEFACT Support Unit

What is UN/CEFACT?

UN/CEFACT, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, supports activities dedicated to improving the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transition economies, to **exchange products and relevant services effectively**. Its principal focus is on facilitating national and international transactions, through **the simplification and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows**, and so contributing to the growth of global commerce.

UN/CEFACT has a global mandate. Participation in the UN/CEFACT Forum is open to all. There are some 300 experts representing every region in the world.

Within the framework of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) serves as the focal point for **trade facilitation recommendations and electronic business standards**, covering both commercial and government business processes that can foster growth in international trade and related services. In this context UN/CEFACT was established, as a subsidiary, intergovernmental body of the UNECE.

This conference takes place during the UN/CEFACT Forum.

Participation is free of charge, but all participants must register as participants to the Forum.

Detailed agendas and registration available at:
<http://www.unece.org/31stuncefactforum.html>

For more information:

<http://www.unece.org/cefact>

See also: <http://tfig.unece.org/>

UNECE secretariat:

+41 22 917 3254

Lance Thompson, Head UN/CEFACT Support Unit

lance.thompson@un.org