Economic Commission for Europe
Executive Committee
Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda
Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and
Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE)

Locations (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group on its second
annual meeting

I. Attendance

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group held its second annual meeting from 18 to 19 October 2018 in Hangzhou, China.

2. The following countries were represented on site: China, Japan and Thailand. The following United Nations organizations participated in the meeting: International Maritime Organization (IMO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The following intergovernmental organizations and private sector participants participated in the meeting: Bureau International des Containers (BIC), Hapag-Lloyd on behalf of Shipplanning Message Development Group (SMDG), CalConnect, Port of Barcelona, Protect Group, Ribose Inc., Dagang Net Technologies, Gainde 2000, Alibaba Group and GT Nexus. The following countries, intergovernmental organizations and private sector representatives participated remotely: Turkey, France, Thailand, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), MASODA, Hamburg Süd Shipping Line, COSCON.

3. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group delivered opening speeches, highlighting the importance of UN/LOCODE, UN/LOCODE Focal Points (FPs) and the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. They expressed their gratitude to achievements and progress made by all stakeholders. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division also underlined the relevance of UN/LOCODE.
II. Discussion on development issues

4. On the subject of the use of UN/LOCODE for dry ports, the representative of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) made a remote presentation to introduce their Regional Framework for Development, Design, Planning and Operation of Dry Ports of International Importance. In this regional framework, it is strongly recommended that all dry ports that have not yet applied for a UN/LOCODE should do so. But so far very few in the Asia and Pacific region have applied for UN/LOCODEs and this fact prevents the dry ports in this region from being easily identified and recognized. Following the formulation of this regional framework, the UNESCAP Secretariat cooperated with the UNECE Secretariat at three capacity-building workshops organized this year in different subregions to promote activities including assigning UN/LOCODEs to the dry ports. He expressed his expectation to further cooperate with the UNECE Secretariat on this matter.

5. On the subject of the UNECE Recommendation 16 Revision, the project leader, the Turkey Focal Point, made a remote presentation on this UN/CEFACT project under the Open Development Process (ODP) and updated the participants on its status. The project deliverables include the introduction of the revised recommendation and the guidelines. The draft text will be completed through three rounds of discussions via teleconference and comments by email and a face-to-face project meeting held on 3 and 4 December 2018 in Geneva.

6. On the subject of the Convention of Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic adopted by the IMO (IMO FAL), the Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group emphasized that an important part of the Convention is to recommend the use of UN/LOCODE and mentioned that both the Convention and its Compendium are under review and are to be approved at the IMO Plenary in April 2019. Another UN/CEFACT project aims to add an annex to the revised IMO FAL Compendium in order to provide mappings from this independent IMO Reference Model to UN/CEFACT standards, including the United Nations Core Component Library (CCL); and the UN/CEFACT Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT-RDM).

7. On the subject of FAO Fisheries Instruments and Tools, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) explained how UN/LOCODE is used to fight Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing for the sake of sustainable fisheries. The Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (FLUX), developed by UN/CEFACT, contributes to combat IUU; the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels allows the sharing information essential to fisheries management at the national level among different agencies, and at the regional and global levels. These instruments are necessary to achieve the required transparency and traceability at all levels and binding through the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). UN/LOCODE will be used in the following parts of these instruments: Vessel Domain (port of registration) and Inspections Domain (port of inspection or denial of entry/use). Several years ago, the IMO Secretariat and some FAO member states reported that ports assigned with UN/LOCODE were not completely updated. As a result, FAO made a code list for temporary use until the full update of UN/LOCODE. FAO has established a network of National Focal Point through port authorities for the electronic exchange of individual inspections reports based on the PSMA; FAO is expecting to coordinate this network with the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network.
8. On the subject of major changes in the UN/LOCODE releases, the French Focal Point from the Institut Géographique National (IGN) shared his work plan to review the existing code list for France via video conference. It has been agreed that a one-time review of the existing code list is one of the most important duties for each National Focal Point. If a big change is predicted, it is strongly recommended that the Advisory Group be informed of the review work being undertaken by the Focal Point. Any big changes in France - one of the top five countries with the most UN/LOCODE entries - might affect the user community. The Focal Point of France reported that this one-time review, with reference to the IGN database, has two stages: the first part scheduled for 2018 and the second for 2019. Considering the fact that besides ‘FR’, a total of 13 country codes are under the umbrella of France, and that more than 1500 out of 14318 entries are missing or misusing coordinates, the first step is to fix invalid coordinates and false subdivisions to reduce duplicated entries. The next step is to check the official spelling of location names. The location names will be changed for more than 1100 entries. The final step is to check functions, starting with ports (Function 1), rail terminals (Function 2) and airports (Function 4). Concerning locations with function 1 but far from water (i.e. far from navigable waterway and sea harbours), it has been suggested that function 1 be replaced with function 0 if there are no other obvious functions. For more than 100 locations without rail facilities, function 2 should be removed. Concerning airports, more than 100 entries with recorded International Air Transport Association (IATA) codes in the IATA column don’t concern commercial airports but leisure airports. Therefore, it is recommended that these codes in the IATA column be deleted and function 4 be removed. Entries with function 3 and 6 will be checked at the second stage in 2019. The challenge is to validate the relevance of international trade for many locations with function 3 and 6. The group appreciated the efforts made by the French Focal Point and the arrangement made by the Secretariat to invite the Focal Point to present them.

9. On the subject of time zones, the representative of Ribose on behalf of CalConnect - an international standards development organization dealing with calendaring and scheduling, contacts and addressing, and data and time - reported that there is no standard definition for time zone in spite of the idea of time shifts derived from Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). Today’s time zones are “best effort” lists compiled and distributed by volunteer time zone databases such as the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) Time Zone Database and the Microsoft Time Zone Index. Based on problems with which users and time zone authorities are faced, it is urged to empower one time zone authority to be the authoritative source of time zone information. Therefore, it is proposed to:

- Extend UN/LOCODE by adding a ‘UTS Code’ column, which would stand for Unified Time zone System; and
- Allow time zone authorities to declare time zones through UN/LOCODE National Focal Points.

10. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group expressed their interest in the proposals. The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group suggested discussing it on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE) and documenting the feasibility study as a white paper or a green paper in support of CalConnect.

III. Discussion on UN/LOCODE Maintenance

11. The representative of Hapag-Lloyd on behalf of SMDG made several suggestions to improve UN/LOCODE. It was reiterated that UN/LOCODE should only be assigned a for a metropolitan area instead of a terminal within that area, that a child coding system should be used to identify a subset within a metropolitan location and UN/LOCODE should recognize these child code lists and their maintenance agencies. Also, the UN/LOCODE
function definitions need to be clarified. For example, Function 1 refers to a location that either has a port or is the port. The former is supported by the representative because if specific codes for a subset within the city are needed, then the child code list could be used. Finally, he proposed to improve the maintenance procedure among all stakeholders, including requesters, National Focal Points, the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group and the UNECE Secretariat.

12. The representative of International Maritime Organization (IMO) shared with the participants how UN/LOCODE is used in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS), where 8 out of 34 modules use UN/LOCODEs. He stressed that only one UN/LOCODE should be assigned to a port and that its port facilities should be identified with four-digit child codes. Because of the lack of an automated update procedure between GISIS and UN/LOCODE releases, IMO member states must update their port list in GISIS to align with UN/LOCODE. The request for update needs to be done in a short timeframe.

13. The representative of the Bureau International des Containers (BIC) showcased several Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) for France, Italy, Spain and Kazakhstan in collaboration with the National Focal Points. He drew the participants’ attention to the fact that it is impossible to know whether the Secretariat has already assigned a UN/LOCODE to a location or whether the Secretariat has already assigned a requested code to another location since the last UN/LOCODE publication. The representative also mentioned that it is currently impossible to follow up after submitting a DMR.

14. The Brazilian Focal Point shared his thoughts on UN/LOCODE maintenance via a pre-recorded presentation. In his opinion, we have to avoid disrupting the trust among stakeholders (and even hindering the use of UN/LOCODE) by seeking consensus instead of imposing solutions; in order to find a balance when attempting to fulfill the needs of the international trade community we must work together with the precision and high quality harmonization provided by NFPs. He also mentioned the necessity to clarify definitions in the Recommendation 16 revision. For example, a location is always an area, however, a specific point like an airport or a port within a municipality may be identified with a different UN/LOCODE. Because of eCommerce, locations that are typically of domestic use may have the potential to be part of international trade. For locations with names spelt in the national language, a column should be added to indicate the location name in English. The Focal Point suggested that National Focal Points be nominated by governments, and UNECE should nominate other focal points for countries without NFPs.

15. The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group introduced the main topic to be discussed at this meeting: how to improve UN/LOCODE maintenance in order to free up the Secretariat’s time for more important issues.

16. The secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group presented the UN/LOCODE maintenance history and current procedure. The involvement of the Focal Points, whose countries are concerned by the DMRs in the validation procedure, causes complexity which cannot be supported in the current UN/LOCODE system. Coordination done by the Secretariat increases the workload; and the Secretariat is already very busy due to a gap between available resources and more demands and expectations from the user community.

17. The secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group demonstrated a proof of concept implemented on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE) for a new maintenance workflow proposal.

18. The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group shared the reference practice for UN/CEFACT library maintenance. UN/CEFACT is famous for trust and good procedure. UN/EDIFACT and the Core Component Library (CCL), published bi-annually like UN/LOCODE, might be good examples. ‘Quality Assurance’ (QA) is guaranteed by (i) the guideline upon submission of the DMR to the CCL (ii) and a technical checklist to ensure
that the DMR is clean and ready for validation. The Chair pointed out that the deletion policy and procedure is different for the United National Trade Data Element Directory (UNTDED), UN/EDIFACT and CCL, and called for a common procedure of deletion across the UN/CEFACT libraries.

19. The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group opened the floor to discuss questions raised on the agenda:

- How can we optimize the current resources in order to satisfy growing demands?
- What are the obligations of the Requester of DMRs in this process?
- What could be the role of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group?
- Should one-off DMR requests be treated the same way as requesters who submit dozens of requests?
- How to encourage UN/LOCODE Focal Points to play an active role in UN/LOCODE maintenance?
- Should we revisit the current maintenance policy and process?
- If so, what should be proposed as a new policy and process?

20. The Secretariat raised the issue of high-volume requesters, who are expected to submit DMRs in a professional way. If there is an error in a DMR, the DMR should be returned to the requester for correction instead of having the Secretariat correct it.

21. It was agreed to set up a UN/LOCODE maintenance team of volunteers from the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. The team will undertake the maintenance of UN/LOCODE via teleconference with the support of the Secretariat.

22. A new workflow of UN/LOCODE maintenance is agreed as follows:

- The Secretariat schedules a teleconference to validate DMRs on a regular basis, or upon a special request;
- The Secretariat prepares the DMRs and publishes them on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE) in advance;
- The Focal Points are required to submit comments on the DMRs for their countries before each teleconference and members of maintenance team should be invited to submit comments;
- All comments should be posted on CUE. Only DMRs with negative comments should be discussed in the teleconference;
- The requesters and the FPs whose countries are concerned by DMRs should be present, if possible, and other members of the maintenance team will be able to participate via teleconference;
- If the absence of FPs or requesters results in the postponement of the DMR validation, the FPs or requesters will be requested to attend the next teleconference, and if after that there has still not been any FP participation then the DMR will be processed;
- The Secretariat publishes the validation results on CUE, and
- Any individual result cannot be reconsidered unless a strong justification is presented for agreement by the maintenance team.
IV. Discussion on other issues

23. It has been discussed in the previous UN/LOCODE meetings that attention should be paid to child coding systems. It has been mentioned that IMO and BIC use UN/LOCODE as a base and introduce their child coding systems for different purposes. Child coding systems should be clarified in the revised Recommendation 16 - including how to recognize them with respect to the maintenance procedure.

24. It is noted that the new business needs and new maintenance workflow must be supported with a new information technology (IT) system. Even though the necessity and urgency of re-engineering the current UN/LOCODE system has been discussed in the previous UN/LOCODE meetings, no progress has been reported to the group. More resources are expected from the user community to speed up this work. The China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) volunteered to support the re-engineering, which is highly appreciated by the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

V. Decisions of the Advisory Group

25. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group:

(a) Recognizing that the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group plays an indispensable role in dealing with all important issues related to UN/LOCODE maintenance and development;

(b) Acknowledging that all decisions made at the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Launch Meeting in 2017 be followed up and developed successfully;

(c) Appreciating Ms. Sue Probert’s work as the first chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group;

(d) Taking note with appreciation of the recent work undertaken by the UNECE Secretariat;

(e) Taking further note of the urgency of re-engineering the UN/LOCODE system;

(f) Drawing attention to the drawbacks of the current UN/LOCODE maintenance procedure and the necessity of improving the UN/LOCODE maintenance;

(g) Agree that a UN/LOCODE maintenance team to be set up based on volunteers from the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group; (Decision 18-01)

(h) Request that the UN/LOCODE maintenance team be responsible for the validation of DMRs with the support of the Secretariat, led by two co-convenors (one from public and one from the private sector); (Decision 18-02)

(i) Agree that procedures for this team will be developed by the Secretariat with the Chair and circulated to the group for comments; (Decision 18-03)

(j) Agree to approve the new workflow as proposed by the Secretariat and as amended by the advisory group. The new workflow should be implemented from 1st October 2018 and that the UN/LOCODE maintenance team undertake DMR validation based on the new workflow agreed by the Advisory Group; (Decision 18-04)

(k) Invite the Advisory Group members to join the UN/LOCODE maintenance team;
(l) Request that the Secretariat report the work of the UN/LOCODE maintenance team and share feedback from the user community at the next UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Annual Meeting; (Decision 18-05)

(m) Request that the project leader of the UNECE Recommendation 16 Revision report the status of the project at the next UN/LOCODE Advisory Group Annual Meeting; (Decision 18-06)

(n) Request that the draft texts of the revised UNECE Recommendation 16 be circulated for comments in the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group; (Decision 18-07)

(o) Welcome resources from the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group and the user community to support the re-engineering of the UN/LOCODE system. (Decision 18-08)