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Matters arising since the twenty-fifth session

UNECE Nexus: Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has put in place four Nexus themes to encourage cross-divisional work and better respond to the needs of its member States in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. This document describes the overall approach and the envisaged publication from the perspective of the work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT).

Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/INF.1 is submitted by the UNECE Secretariat to the twenty-sixth session of the Plenary for information.

I. What is a nexus and why do we need it?

1. The United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development provides 17 goals which all countries and all individuals are encouraged to achieve in view of leaving no one behind. All work within the United Nations should focus on contributing to these goals. Indeed, many of the conventions, recommendations and standards developed by the UNECE assist in implementing the various goals.

2. In 2019, the UNECE Executive Secretary decided to promote synergies between the different programmes while focusing on support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Four nexus areas were identified to reflect existing synergies and to encourage further collaboration. These nexuses are:

- Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity
- Smart and Sustainable Cities
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
- Measuring and Monitoring SDGs

3. Much of the work of UN/CEFACT is associated with the Nexus on Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity. The Trade Facilitation Section of the UNECE, which provides the Secretariat of UN/CEFACT, therefore engages actively in the work of this nexus.

4. Collaboration already exists between UN/CEFACT and many other programs of the UNECE, most prominently with the Sustainable Transport Division. Several deliverables of UN/CEFACT directly support instruments of the Sustainable Transport Division and these have often been developed in close collaboration with UN/CEFACT experts and UNECE staff assigned to relevant working groups. The electronic messages for the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) concerning the Electronic Consignment Note (eCMR) standard and the Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model serve as examples.

5. The nexus approach has allowed for the identification of other potential themes developed in different UNECE programs where resources can be pooled, and work cross-fertilized. Current UN/CEFACT work on sustainable tourism is a topic also being addressed within the Environment Division; the working teams can be brought together to harmonize this guidance and provide comprehensive deliverables.

6. The Trade Facilitation Section of the UNECE has also actively participated in the other nexus themes. UN/CEFACT work on traceability compliments the work in other UNECE programs, such as the Natural Resources Nexus.

II. Flagship publication: Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity

7. Beyond identifying potential synergies between the programs of the UNECE, each nexus has been working on the development of a flagship publication. These aim to identify, for each nexus theme, the strengths and weaknesses of the UNECE region and how the work of the UNECE could contribute to improving the weaknesses identified and help to achieve the relevant SDGs.

8. The initial draft of the Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity flagship publication was finalized in December 2019 and has been submitted internally for comments and next steps.

9. The publication is divided into two parts on each half of the nexus theme: one on Smart Connectivity and one on Sustainable Mobility. The Smart Connectivity part of the publication indicates that for trade to be smart, it must first have a solid foundation of data exchange on which standards and quality infrastructure can be built. It also emphasizes the importance of having common, harmonized regulatory frameworks. The UNECE region has several well-established initiatives in these areas, and the publication underlines the areas where UN/CEFACT has played a key role, such as:

- recommendations on Single Window systems;
- recommendations on National Trade Facilitation Bodies and Consultation Approaches;
- clear, base semantic standards (UN/EDIFACT, Core Component Library, Reference Data Models, etc.); and
- electronic business standards (Cross Industry Invoice, eCMR, Transboundary Movement of Waste, eCert, UN/FLUX, etc.).

10. The publication also proposes a matrix of “Challenges and Possible Role of the UNECE.” This matrix also includes areas pertinent to UN/CEFACT.

11. The recommendations proposed in the current draft include that the UNECE should:

- consider its continued role as focal point for electronic business, helping governments, stakeholders and other United Nations bodies to satisfy their needs for electronic messaging;
- encourage the use of the UN/CEFACT semantic model of data for electronic business exchanges and encourage governments and stakeholders to contribute to its development and maintenance; and
- consider a convention on the legal validity of electronic exchanges across borders.

12. It is expected that this publication will be translated into Russian and will be available in the summer of 2020.
