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Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE)

Report on Activities of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group in 2019

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) identifies locations related to international trade around the world. It is a five-character code where the first two characters represent the International Standards Organization (ISO) country code followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
2. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group advises and supports the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Secretariat and the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) in the maintenance and further development of UN/LOCODE.
3. The establishment of the Advisory Group was endorsed by the UNECE Executive Committee in June 2017 and its first meeting took place in Geneva from 30 November to 1 December 2017.
4. Following its second annual meeting held in Hangzhou, China on 25 and 26 October 2018, based on the decisions made at the meeting, and with support of the Secretariat, the following activities were undertaken to provide better services to the user community.

II. Overview of recent relevant developments

5. The UN/LOCODE Directory 2018-2 and 2019-1 have been published on the UNECE website as scheduled. The UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network has been expanded with the new nomination of Mongolia and re-nominations from Cyprus, Nepal, and the Netherlands.
6. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized the meeting of the Global Record Working Group (GRWG) in May. Despite being invited, the Secretariat could not

travel to attend it due to budget constraints. The Secretariat recorded a presentation to introduce UN/LOCODE and it was played at the meeting, which was highly appreciated by the FAO. GRWG recognized the importance of using standardized reference lists for submission of data within the Global Record Information System and saw the potential of UN/LOCODE as a suitable international standard for identifying ports in the system, considering recent developments (e.g. National Focal Point Network and UN/LOCODE Child Codes). However, as not all ports currently have a UN/LOCODE assigned, GRWG proposed the possibility of the UN/LOCODE being the preferred option or utilizing an alternative code, noting that the creation of new UN/LOCODEs can also be requested.

7. The Chair of UN/CEFACT has been involved in the review of the Convention of Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO FAL). In November 2019 the IMO Expert Group on Data Harmonization (EGDH) discussed the electronic data necessary for their convention. They want to identify several new types of places, such as the place of anchorage, terminal, and berth. For the latter two, there are child repositories from IMO in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) that can assist with this. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) has suggested using a new standard, that they are developing, called Maritime Resource Name (MRN). A suggestion was made to look into the feasibility of using UN/LOCODE as a base.

8. In the Regional Framework for Development, Design, Planning, and Operation of Dry Ports of International Importance, initiated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), it is strongly recommended that all dry ports that have not yet applied for a UN/LOCODE should do so. Many countries in this region have requested a UN/LOCODE for their dry ports.

III. The revised UNECE Recommendation N°16

9. As one of the most important decisions made at the first meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the Group invited UN/CEFACT to revise UNECE Recommendation N°16 through the UN/CEFACT Open Development Process (ODP). (Decision 17-01 made at the first meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group from 30 November to 1 December 2017 in Geneva).

10. Aimed at addressing the concerns indicated in Decision 17-01, the revised Recommendation N°16 is expected to do the following:

- Provide a clear definition of what the UN/LOCODE is, its scope and what granularity should be used;
- Provide clear guidance on all aspects of UN/LOCODE to eliminate areas of ambiguity (e.g. definition of what a location is, addition of new functions, definitions of functions, etc.);
- Provide a procedure and context for registering significant changes (what constitutes a significant change, if deletion should be allowed, what delay should be provided to allow the user community to prepare, etc.);
- Define how Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) should be announced and communicated (acknowledgement of receipt of DMR, acknowledgement once it has been accepted or rejected with the reasons, etc.);
- Officially designate the use of “0” (zero) as a location that does not have an official function (function zero should not be combined with any other function). It could also be used to deprecate codes without deleting them from the list;

- Consider requiring the registration of those who request codes (for post-verifications or future questions);
 - Consider how to share the history of DMRs;
 - Determine how to standardize multilingual entries and aliases in an unambiguous way;
 - Propose solutions for the reuse of UN/LOCODEs (e.g. in child repositories) and how these could be identified and shared in the UN/LOCODE repository.
11. The project for the revision of UNECE Recommendation N°16 was approved in February 2018 and is projected to be completed within one year. Mr. Alper Keceli was nominated as the Project Leader, who is the National Focal Point for Turkey.
12. In line with the ODP, a series of face-to-face meetings were organized in Geneva, with the support of the Secretariat:
- The project launch meeting was held on 27 April 2018 during the 31st UN/CEFACT Forum;
 - A second project meeting took place on 3 and 4 December 2018;
 - The last project meeting was held on 3 April 2019 during the 33rd UN/CEFACT Forum.
13. Under the guidance of the Project Leader, inputs and comments from the user community were compiled and discussed in several rounds via email. The project entered the Public Review stage on 21 June 2019. On 28 August 2019 the project team held a web conference to process all comments received during the two-month Public Review period.
14. In line with the format of other recently revised and published UNECE Recommendations, the outcomes of the project include the revised Recommendation, Guidelines, and three Annexes. These have been approved by the UN/CEFACT Bureau. Pending editorial changes by the Secretariat, they will be ready for submission to the next UN/CEFACT Plenary for approval (May 2020).
15. The revised Recommendation N°16 incorporates the following changes:

Part I: Recommendation n°16

16. Part I emphasizes the importance of the involvement of Governments and the user community in the development and maintenance of UN/LOCODE. The UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network should be enhanced by the nomination of National Focal Points by their respective Governments.

Part II: Guidelines for the Application of UN/LOCODE

17. Part II updates include the following:
- Clarification is provided for the concepts of point versus area.
 - UN/LOCODE attributes include Name, Subdivision, Function, Status, Geographical Coordinates; all attributes are mandatory.
 - In order to align with the UNECE Recommendation N°19 (Code for Modes of Transport), Function '1' to '7' plus 'B' have been retained, while the functions of locations have been changed as follows:
 - Function '8' has been added to distinguish inland water ports from maritime ports (Function '1').

- Function ‘A’ has been added for the Special Economic Zone.
- Function ‘0’ has been redefined as ‘not officially functional’.
- The legacy status designations: ‘AA’, ‘AC’, ‘AF’, ‘AI’, ‘AS’, ‘AQ’ and ‘RN’, have been replaced with ‘AM’, meaning ‘approved by the UN/LOCODE maintenance team’;
- UN/LOCODE Child Codes are introduced.

Annexes

18. The Annexes are revised by the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group at the request of the Secretariat when processes and procedures change. The revision of an Annex does not require the revision of Recommendation N°16, which has three Annexes:

- Annex I: UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy and Procedure;
- Annex II: Publication of UN/LOCODE Directory;
- Annex III: Child Code List.

IV. The UN/LOCODE maintenance

19. As agreed, a UN/LOCODE maintenance team, composed of volunteers from the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, was set up (Decision 18-01). This team is responsible for the validation of DMRs, is supported by the Secretariat, and is led by two co-convenors (Decision 18-02). The new maintenance workflow was approved at the last annual meeting (Decision 18-03).

20. The UN/LOCODE maintenance team was set up to carry out the new maintenance workflow, with strong support from the Secretariat, and under the leadership of two co-convenors—one from the public sector and the other from the private sector.

21. UN/LOCODE Maintenance Meetings are held via web conference on a regular basis, normally weekly, and outside of the period of the UN/LOCODE directory generation and publication. The DMR submitters are invited to join the team to explain and justify their requests.

22. The collaboration platform for the team has been implemented on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE) ¹. The maintenance meeting page is published on CUE following each meeting and all approved DMRs are shared on CUE.

23. The list of the DMRs to be processed is shared via Google Sheets to enable the maintenance team to work collaboratively. The original fields submitted by requesters cannot be edited; the team member can revise the attributes of DMR, such as location name, subdivision, function, and coordinates and are encouraged to leave remarks to justify the revision or proposed validation result.

24. The validation of UN/LOCODE DMRs through team collaboration has been a fruitful experience. The team is composed of UN/LOCODE Focal Points, experts, and the Secretariat. This best practice makes better use of the valuable resources of both the public sector and the private sector, and improves the data quality of UN/LOCODE through the consistent understanding of Recommendation 16 and application of validation rules.

¹ <https://uncefact.unece.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=27787662>.

25. Besides validating individual DMRs, the team has also discussed many maintenance issues, some of which will be raised at the next annual UN/LOCODE Advisory Group meeting for further discussion and decisions. The following are some examples:

- Requests to assign a UN/LOCODE to a terminal or facility at a port should be rejected and the submitter should be encouraged to use UN/LOCODE Child Codes like SMDG or BIC codes.
- Thanks to the communication channel established during maintenance team meetings, submitters of large volumes of DMRs now understand that UN/LOCODEs requested for locations must be for ongoing trade purposes instead of one-time use and they have adjusted their approach.
- Some requests, such as those from the banking and telecommunications industries, fall into a grey area outside the scope defined in Recommendation N°16.
- International organizations acting as registrar for various kinds of places or facilities are strongly encouraged to consider the feasibility of creating Child Codes using UN/LOCODE as a base and to avoid introducing new code lists for different purposes.

V. The UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project

26. In response to **Decision 18-08**, the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) volunteered to provide resources to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system.

27. Based on the Terms of Reference agreed upon between the Secretariat and CNIS, the project team was set up at the project kick-off meeting, held via WebEx on 27 July 2019, to develop and deploy the new UN/LOCODE system. CNIS will support the data migration from the legacy system and the maintenance of the new system for at least five years.

28. The Business Requirement Analysis report will be ready for presentation to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for approval at the 2020 annual meeting. The new UN/LOCODE system is expected to be developed using current information and communications technology and will meet the business requirements.

29. The business processes covering the DMR life cycle are specified in the Business Requirement Analysis report. All use cases, including business use cases and administrative use cases are described in the report.
