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**UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR TRADE FACILITATION AND ELECTRONIC BUSINESS
(UN/CEFACT)**

ROLE OF REGIONAL COMMISSIONS IN UN/CEFACT

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Submitted by the Bureau

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Role of Regional Commissions in UN/CEFACT

Introduction:

UNCEFACT's vision is to provide "simple, transparent and effective processes for global commerce." In the changing scenario the spectrum of UNCEFACT has enlarged and the policies and work program are targeted to be global. It is by and large felt that most of the centre's work program and deliverables have been Eurocentric. Efforts were made from time to time to join hands with partners around the world who could act as facilitator in pursuing the goals/objectives of UNCEFACT across the globe. In order to do this it was felt that regional commissions can play an active role. As a result, discussions were made at different levels. Based on the discussions, it was felt that a uniform system of establishing linkages with the five regional commissions be made who could actively pursue the objectives of UNCEFACT in their respective regions through the focal points of the member states of the regional commissions. This paper attempts formalizing such an arrangement.

2. UN/CEFACT Objectives:

The UN/CEFACT supports activities dedicated to improving the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transitional 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 contributes to the growth of global commerce.

This is achieved by :

- Analysing and understanding the key elements of international processes, procedures and transactions and working for the elimination of constraints;
- Developing methods to facilitate processes, procedures and transactions, including the relevant use of information technologies;
- Promoting both the use of these methods, and associated best practices, through channels such as government, industry and service associations;
- Coordinating its work with other international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);

- Securing coherence in the development of standards by co-operating with other interested parties, including international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In particular, for electronic business standards, this coherence is accomplished by cooperating with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the context of the ISO/IEC/ITU/UNECE Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). These relationships were established in recognition that UN/CEFACT's work has broad application in the areas beyond global commerce and that interoperability of applications and their ability to support multi-lingual environments, are key objectives.
- Pursuing Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business strategies

2.1 UN/CEFACT Trade Facilitation Strategy:

At the centre of this strategy are the following elements:

- A holistic approach to the international trade transaction process;
- The identification and elimination of Non-tariff barriers to trade;
- Trade security – to address the shift in focus in recent years from the threat to trade to the threat from trade;
- To promote the use of UN/CEFACT instruments to address trade facilitation issues in the WTO Doha Work programme;
- To develop Capacity Building programmes on Trade Facilitation Implementation

2.2 UN/CEFACT eBusiness Strategy:

At the centre of this e-Business Strategy are in the following four fundamental elements:

- Cross-sectoral analysis (to promote interoperability and supply chain synchronicity);
- Business process and information modelling (to capture user requirements, independent of any specific technology, through the creation of business collaboration models); and

- New technologies as they emerge (e.g., eXtensible Markup Language (XML), Web Services, shared and/or distributed objects, etc.).
- international standards for enabling eBusiness systems and interoperability

3.0 Interface with Regional Commissions:

The major requirement at present is to interface with respective Regional Commissions, which can liaise with their member countries on day to day basis for dissemination of information, conduction of training/awareness etc. on the tools promoted by UN/CEFACT like recommendations, standards, projects like UNeDocs etc.

There are various Trade Facilitation Recommendations developed by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business and UNECE, several of which have become ISO Standards. The Recommendations reflect best practices in trade procedures and standards and have been of enormous benefit to government administrations, traders and providers of trade-related services. They include the widely used UN Layout Key, a guideline for designing trade documents and the basis of the EU Single Administrative Document, the International Bill of Lading and other such documents. Other recommendations include the UN Location Code for over 40,000 trade locations in the world, the Country Code that has been adopted as an ISO standard etc.

The international standards supported are electronic data interchange (EDI), the most important of which is the UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT), the global standard for EDI. Information is also provided on the recently developed Recommendations on the establishment of a Single Window for the submission of trade documents, complemented with guidelines assisting countries to establish the single window concept tailor-made to their needs, are also included.

The UNCEFACT has launched a major new initiative that provides electronic alternatives to key paper documents in the international supply chain. It has adopted the United Nations electronic trade documents project (UNeDocs) as the basis for a new, global standard for digital trade documents. UNeDocs had previously been developed as a joint project between the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe and SITPRO, the United Kingdom trade

facilitation agency, with financial support from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

UNCEFACT has set up the UNeDocs TBG2 Working Group to develop the paper and electronic specifications for the core documents used in international trade. The Group will also develop customized document specifications to support national, regional and international projects for Single Window implementation and paperless trade.

4.0 Role of Regional Commissions :

It is understood that the members of the regional commission have identified focal points in the respective member states who provide an effective interface with regional commissions in pursuing the objectives of the regional commission in their respective territory. These focal points are located broadly in the Ministry of Trade. It is felt that these focal points can provide active interface between UNCEFACT, Regional Commission and the member states in actively pursuing the objectives of UNCEFACT.

It is widely recognised that UNCEFACT has been active in formalising various tools, technologies, standards, best practices and recommendations for pursuing its objectives. The members states focal points could actively promote these objectives in their respective territories in close coordination with the regional commission.

5.0 Integration of Regional Commissions in UNCEFACT :

It is proposed that regional commissions may enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with UNCEFACT to promote the objectives of UNCEFACT in the region. In order to do this, regional commissions may actively participate in the work programme of UNCEFACT especially that of Forum and Plenary. This arrangement would facilitate uniform adoption of various policies, standards, best practices and recommendation of UNCEFACT globally to facilitate global commerce.
