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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference, and procedures

Revised rules of procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau

Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau for approval

Summary

The original rules of procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau were approved at the twelfth session, in May 2006, in document TRADE/R.650/Rev.4/Add.2. Revised rules of procedure were submitted to the sixteenth session in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17. The seventeenth session discussed revisions in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.1 and agreed that a revision (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.2) should be approved intersessionally. The current revision includes the comments received and editorial changes. It is being submitted for review and approval.

Previous documentation:

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.2

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.1

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17

TRADE/R.650/Rev.4/Add.2

I. Introduction

1. This document comprises the Rules of Procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau. These rules are based on the Revised Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15).

II. Chair

2. The Chair, with the assistance of vice-chairs of the Bureau and the UNECE secretariat, is responsible for preparing the programme of work for approval by the Plenary, with a view to providing a coherent framework that serves the needs of United Nations Member States and other stakeholders within the context of UN/CEFACT's mandate and terms of reference. This involves fostering outreach to and collaboration with those parties interested in working with UN/CEFACT to achieve common goals and, wherever possible, to avoid duplication of work both within and outside of UN/CEFACT.

3. The Chair, with the assistance of the vice-chairs and the UNECE secretariat, is responsible for scheduling, coordinating and developing agendas for meetings of the Plenary, the Bureau and UN/CEFACT experts.

4. Following consultation with the Bureau, the Chair will invite one or more vice-chairs to assist in formulating, guiding and monitoring the programme of work through Programme Development Areas (PDAs), which involve groups of experts focused on projects and related domains. In particular, PDAs address strategic issues in trade facilitation and electronic business, and provide advice on these issues to the Plenary. The Chair should inform the Plenary of these arrangements and any adjustments considered by the Bureau to improve the deliverables.

III. Principal functions of the Bureau

5. The Bureau consists of a Chair and at least four vice-chairs.

6. The Bureau is responsible to the Plenary for the open, transparent and efficient functioning of UN/CEFACT and the implementation of its Programme of Work.

7. Bureau members act in their personal capacity, and must not represent any special interests of their countries or institutions.

8. The principal functions of the Bureau are:

(a) To manage the ongoing strategic planning and coordination of the UN/CEFACT Programme of Work between Plenary sessions;

(b) To verify that UN/CEFACT activities comply with its mandate, terms of reference and procedures;

(c) To prepare UN/CEFACT meetings, including those of the Plenary, the Bureau and UN/CEFACT experts, in collaboration with the secretariat;

(d) To appoint and guide experts supporting the programme of work, within a structure that can organize experts, projects and key domains within Programme Development Areas, each of which will be supervised by at least one Vice-Chair;

(e) To develop and maintain procedures associated with reviewing and launching project proposals, especially those submitted for the development of UNECE

recommendations and UN/CEFACT standards (which must be accompanied by written expressions of support from three UN/CEFACT country heads of delegation) and, as necessary, to approve the formation of project teams and appoint project leaders, subject to the provisions of the UN/CEFACT Open Development Process;

(f) To promote opportunities for outreach, cooperation and collaboration in order to advance projects supporting the programme of work, particularly through meetings of experts;

(g) With the support of the secretariat, to ensure coherence in matters relating to policy, promotion, communication, cooperation and capacity-building, particularly concerning joint activities with other bodies;

(h) To be accountable for operational and support functions of UN/CEFACT activities (e.g. project control, maintenance of UN/EDIFACT and other UN/CEFACT libraries), with the support of the secretariat, experts and task teams.

9. The full responsibilities of the Bureau are detailed in the Revised Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3).

10. The vice-chairs assist the Chair in meeting the requirements of the full portfolio of responsibilities held by the Bureau.

11. To fulfil their responsibilities, the Bureau may be supported by experts nominated by Plenary delegations. The Bureau may, subject to UNECE rules, also appoint advisers and task teams to support its activities—for example to focus on particular aspects of the programme of work and related proposals for projects in a Programme Development Area. The purpose of advisers and task teams, as well as those involved in such support, will be reported to the Plenary.

12. The Bureau must establish a code of conduct for all participants and, within the procedures associated with its monitoring, the Bureau may nominate an advisor to address specific matters of concern.

13. Failure by a member of the Bureau to participate constructively in the work of the Bureau may lead to the Bureau's requesting the Plenary for a replacement.

IV. Work items

14. The UN/CEFACT programme of work is prepared for Plenary approval on the basis of detailed procedures that are consistent with the Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15).

15. Projects submitted to the Bureau should be within the programme of work so that their approval can be given timely consideration on behalf of the Plenary. Should a proposed Project be outside the bounds of the programme of work, the Bureau will bring this to the attention of the Plenary and may request adjustment of the programme of work.

16. The Bureau will appoint Project Leaders and will indicate which of the stages of the Open Development Process (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/24) apply to specific projects. The Bureau will monitor the progress of projects. Information about the progress will be provided regularly by project teams and will be available on the UN/CEFACT website, which is maintained by the secretariat.

17. Following Bureau procedures, developments in the programme of work and related action items are taken up regularly, decisions recorded and, as necessary, important discussions duly noted.

V. Decisions

18. If any matter requires a formal decision of the Bureau, the Bureau should be informed and receive the related documents not later than two weeks before the decision is to be taken. In exceptional cases, the Bureau may give consideration to a shorter or a longer submission period.
19. The preferred way of reaching decisions shall be by consensus during meetings or by written procedure.
20. For the Bureau to take formal decisions, as well as to vote, a quorum of the Bureau must participate.
21. A quorum is constituted by participation of a majority of Bureau members (i.e. Chair and vice-chairs).
22. According to Bureau procedures, decisions can be taken in both physical and electronic/virtual meetings.
23. If consensus cannot be reached on an issue, the Chair has the authority to call for a vote.
24. In the event of a tied vote of quorum participants, the Chair has the casting vote. Otherwise a simple majority of participants is sufficient to carry a motion.
25. The Chair must ensure that Bureau decisions are recorded and published. A summary report of these decisions must be provided to the Plenary.

VI. Meetings

26. The Bureau meets at least once between Plenary sessions. Additional meetings may also be scheduled at the invitation of the Chair.
27. Bureau procedures apply both to face-to-face and virtual sessions, e.g., teleconferences.
28. Specific dates or a schedule of meetings should be agreed, usually with at least two weeks notice.
29. Bureau members should make every effort to attend meetings, including the sessions of the Plenary and the Forums (see Revised Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3)).
30. For reasons of good order, members should inform the Bureau beforehand when they are unable to attend meetings. The Chair should take up the matter of attendance at Bureau meetings with any member of the Bureau absent from more than half such meetings held between Plenary sessions. In exceptional cases of continual absences, this must be taken up by the Chair with the Head of Delegation who nominated the Bureau member and, as necessary, reported to the Plenary.
31. The UN/CEFACT Chair shall preside over the Bureau meetings. In the absence of the Chair at a Bureau meeting, and if the Chair is unable to appoint a replacement, the Bureau will agree (by consensus) on a replacement for the duration of the meeting as the first item of the agenda of the meeting.
32. The Bureau may invite rapporteurs and others to participate in Bureau meetings and discussions.

VII. Procedures regarding official requests from heads of Plenary delegations

33. Official requests from heads of Plenary delegations to the Bureau may either be orally expressed at Plenary sessions or other meetings, submitted as documents for or during Plenary sessions, or sent (independently from any meeting), to the secretariat or direct to the Bureau.

34. The secretariat creates and maintains a roster of such requests. Requests sent to the Bureau should be transmitted by the Bureau to the secretariat within one week of receipt.

35. Receipt of any request from a head of Plenary delegation must be confirmed within ten days. Depending upon the subject, the Bureau and/or the secretariat decide on how to address the request. A response to the Head of Plenary Delegation (or governmental authority) must be sent within six weeks of its receipt. If a deadline cannot be met, the Bureau will provide an explanation.

36. Official requests and replies to delegations may be made available to all heads of Plenary delegations electronically (e.g. through the appropriate e-mail list) at the discretion of the Head of Plenary Delegation making the request.

37. Heads of Plenary delegation should be informed regularly about policy-related or other important topics raised in the official requests received.

VIII. Communication

38. The Bureau will take steps, with the support of the secretariat, to ensure timely communication of UN/CEFACT developments, mainly through the website.

IX. Filling mid-term vacancies

39. The Bureau should establish procedures to fill mid-term vacancies in its membership.

40. Mid-term vacancies should be filled by decision of the Bureau and must be notified to the heads of Plenary delegation, pending ratification at the subsequent Plenary.
