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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Nineteenth session

Geneva, 5-7 June 2013

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of draft report of the nineteenth session

Report of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business on its nineteenth session

I. Attendance

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its nineteenth session in Geneva from 5 to 7 June 2013.
2. The following countries were represented: Austria, Belgium, Finland, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, Ukraine and United States of America. Representatives of the European Union (EU) were also present.
3. The following United Nations organization participated in the meeting: United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), as well as the following non-governmental organizations: GS1, International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
4. The Chair opened the meeting. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) welcomed delegates and underlined the key role of UN/CEFACT in supporting economic integration through the development of Trade Facilitation.
5. A non-technical overview of the work of the UN/CEFACT was presented for the benefit of Geneva-based diplomatic missions, to introduce them to UN/CEFACT's vision, mandate, accomplishments and trade facilitation deliverables. Participating delegations expressed their appreciation for the presentations made during the briefing.

II Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

6. The Chair reviewed the revised draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/1/Rev. 1 and the documents which had been made available in the three official languages of the UNECE. Delegates were also informed that document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.4: UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures, prepared by the secretariat, would be for discussion instead of approval.

7. The Plenary adopted the amended agenda (**Decision 13-01**).

III. Matters arising since the eighteenth session (agenda item 2)

8. The UNECE secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/3, matters arising since the eighteenth session. This included an introduction to the Review of the 2005 reform of UNECE which had been undertaken by UNECE's Executive Committee and an overview of those recommendations in its outcome document (E/ECE/1468) that were of particular relevance to UN/CEFACT.

9. Within this outcome document, which was approved at the UNECE session in April 2013, the EXCOM recognized that the subsidiary bodies of the UNECE sub-programme on Trade (including UN/CEFACT) undertake value added standards-setting work. With specific regard to UN/CEFACT, the document recommends that UN/CEFACT continue to implement its mandate and that it strengthen its standards activities under the overall guidance of the EXCOM. This represents a change in reporting since, previously, UN/CEFACT reported to the Committee on Trade. This reporting arrangement will be reviewed at the end of 2014.

10. In the area of secretariat resources, three posts were identified in the Global Trade Solutions Section of the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division (the Section supporting UN/CEFACT), that were used for capacity building activities, and EXCOM recommended that two of these be transferred to the Transport Division; whereas the remaining post, after completion of its current activities, should be reallocated within the Trade subprogramme to servicing standard setting activities.

11. The secretariat reported that these cuts would result in a significant reduction in the secretariat's capacity to respond to requests from Member States for assistance in awareness-raising and implementation of trade facilitation and electronic business instruments. It would also severely reduce the ability of the secretariat to manage extra-budgetary projects unless the funding also covers additional staff for implementation.

12. The EXCOM review of the 2005 Reform also set out Guidelines on procedures and practices for UNECE bodies, which needed to be reviewed by UN/CEFACT and which would be discussed further under agenda item 8.

13. The secretariat also updated the Plenary on its capacity-building activities and support to transition economies. It highlighted the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) and work undertaken to support the Greek Government in its trade facilitation efforts. The Director of the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division, which supports UN/CEFACT, emphasized the key strategic nature of the TFIG for promoting UN/CEFACT's work and assisting countries with implementation. She also emphasized the priority that the secretariat would give to seeking funds for the continued development and promotion of the TFIG within the new situation of reduced resources.

14. The Secretariat was requested by the Dutch Delegation to inform the Plenary on the division of tasks in the Secretariat. The chair encouraged the Secretariat to provide this information.

15. The Plenary took note of the report on matters arising and requested the Chair and the secretariat to report on matters arising at the 20th session in 2013 (**Decision 13-02**).

IV. Bureau overview of recent developments (agenda item 3)

16. The Chair and the Vice-Chairs briefed the delegations on recent developments in the Programme Development Areas (PDAs) and in Bureau Programme Support and gave a brief overview of on-going projects and those which were completed since the eighteenth session.

17. The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/Misc.2 and accepted that it satisfied the resolution of Plenary Decision 12-11.

18. The Bureau emphasized the critical importance of having a sufficient number of experts from around the world to be involved in UN/CEFACT projects and support activities. Moreover, it invited delegations to explore various possibilities for attracting additional experts from their countries.

19. The important role of internal and external communication was confirmed by Plenary delegations, in terms of its impact on contributing to the achievement of UN/CEFACT's mandate. The suggestions of Plenary delegations were welcomed by the Bureau and would be incorporated in the communication strategy and related activities

V. Recommendations and standards (agenda item 4)

20. The Bureau presented a summary report on updated recommendations and standards as detailed in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/5 and, in particular, announced that since the last Plenary, it had issued versions D11.B, D12.A and D12.B of UN/EDIFACT; versions 2011-2, 2012-1, 2012-2 and 2013-1 of the UN/LOCODE standard and versions D.11A, D.11B, D.12A and D.12B of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Libraries (CCL) and Schemas.

21. The Plenary noted these versions of UN/EDIFACT, UN/LOCODE, CCL and associated Schemas (**Decision 13-03**).

VI. Reports of Rapporteurs (agenda item 5)

22. The Rapporteur for Africa presented his report on activities since the last session (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/6) and the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific also presented his report (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/7).

23. The Plenary commended the Rapporteurs for their continued support to expanding the outreach of UN/CEFACT's work and outputs in the African and the Asian and Pacific regions and invited them to further develop synergies and cooperation among regions.

24. The Plenary took note of the reports of the Rapporteurs for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific and requested them to provide reports again at the 20th session (**Decision 13-04**).

VII. Challenges for trade facilitation and electronic business (Agenda item 6)

25. A half-day series of presentations, organized by the UN/CEFACT Bureau, took place in order to foster awareness of the current challenges facing trade facilitation and electronic business, particularly from the points of view of both governmental authorities and the private sector. Presentations included:

- Emerging essentials of trade facilitation and requirements for key deliverables, Swedish Head of Delegation;
- The significance of technology neutrality in support of trade facilitation, UNCITRAL;
- Global benefits from the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) standard and lessons-learned, GS1 Head of Delegation;
- Fostering interoperability in support of trade facilitation: an academic vision, Austrian Head of Delegation;
- Success factors for governments and business in standards-based cross-border implementations: the case of e-procurement, Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration and Reform;
- Focal points for expanded practical cooperation among standards organisations, Chair of the Management Group of the Memorandum of Understanding on e-Business (MOUMG).

26. The Chair thanked the presenters and noted that this discussion had raised several issues that should be taken up in Agenda Item 7.

VIII. Strategic directions (agenda item 7)

27. Delegations discussed the document prepared by the Bureau on an integrated strategic framework for UN/CEFACT, ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/8.

28. The Chair indicated that points raised in discussion under item 6 of the Agenda, would be integrated into the strategy.

29. The Swedish Delegation thanked the Bureau for their initiative in developing the Integrated Strategic Framework for UN/CEFACT, ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2013/8 and pointed to the importance of aiming all deliverables at the implementation of trade facilitation. The Swedish Delegation also thanked the Bureau for including in the document a reference to “Core Component Library and associated schema” as this would satisfy the needs of many stakeholders. Sweden is expecting UN/CEFACT to continue to produce XML-schemas.

30. The Plenary agreed that the revised document would be submitted for intersession approval (Decision 13-05).

31. The Chair further indicated that issues raised will be also reflected in the programme of work for 2014-2015 to be presented to the Plenary in December 2013.

IX. UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference, and procedures (agenda item 8)

32. Prior to the session, the secretariat informally reviewed the “UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3), and prepared a revised version, where they made a first attempt at reflecting the decisions and guidelines contained in EXCOM document E/ECE/1468. This revised version (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.4) was presented to the Plenary.

33. Delegations discussed the changes proposed and decided to take a two-step approach. The first step will be a revision in order to reflect the changes agreed during the meeting and will formalize the change in the line of reporting of UN/CEFACT (from the Committee on Trade to the EXCOM). This version will be presented to EXCOM as soon as possible. In the second step, to be undertaken at a later stage, any changes related to the roles and procedures of the Plenary and Bureau would be addressed, following discussions in the framework of EXCOM on the application of the guidelines found in E/ECE/1468. This further revision could then be discussed at the next Plenary.

34. The secretariat is requested to proceed with the above described two step approach to the revision of Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3 (**Decision 13-06**).

X. Elections (agenda item 9)

35. The Swedish Delegation proposed Mr Ibrahima Nour Eddine Diagne as Rapporteur for Africa. The Indian Delegation proposed Mr Mitsuru Ishigaki as Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific.

36. The Plenary elected by acclamation Mr Diagne as Rapporteur for Africa and Mr Ishigaki as Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific for the period 2013-2015 (**Decision 13-07**).

XI. Other business (agenda item 10)

37. ISO made a presentation on their current activities and initiatives to enhance the standard development process.

38. The Delegation of the Netherlands requested that the secretariat takes on board the tasks of the UN/EDIFACT entry point (for data maintenance requests) in order to be sure that this task can be assured in a continuous, secure manner and with adequate resources. Other delegations requested that any changes in the current situation be undertaken in a manner so as to ensure that no disruptions affect the smooth functioning of the UN/EDIFACT maintenance process.

39. It was suggested that the Bureau and the secretariat continue to explore the possibility of supporting the UN/EDIFACT maintenance procedures, with particular attention to ensuring that sufficient resources can be dedicated to this task.

40. The Swedish Delegation and the secretariat presented the need for a comprehensive approach to Single Window interoperability. They indicated that this was a major opportunity for UN/CEFACT to provide the recommendations, framework and standards required to address this critical issue. Delegates emphasised the need for UN/CEFACT to organise and provide the necessary technical framework. A proposal was also made to organise a Single Window Interoperability Symposium in 2014 with the participation of all key players. Delegates responded favourably to this proposal.

41. The Plenary decided to hold the 20th session of UN/CEFACT the 5 - 6 December 2013 and requested the Bureau, in cooperation with the secretariat, to organize the meeting and inform delegations accordingly (**Decision 13-08**).

XII. Adoption of decisions and the provisional draft report of the nineteenth session (agenda item 11)

42. The Plenary adopted the decisions made and the draft provisional report of the nineteenth session and requested the secretariat to send the final draft report to Heads of Delegation for confirmation by 14 June 2013. (**Decision 13-09**).
