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Reports of rapporteurs

Report of the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific

I.   Introduction

1.   This is the report of the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific, covering several important sessions on trade facilitation in the region since the nineteenth session of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) in June 2013.

2.   One of the main themes in the Asia-Pacific region is that data communication is being continuously and rapidly driven by the growth of global supply chains utilizing e-business between trading partners and related stakeholders. This has given rise to many challenges in creating and developing the information and communication technology infrastructures and networks that play an important role in governing high-level transparent global supply/value chains. Therefore, the countries and regional bodies in the Asia Pacific region continue their efforts to realize the potential of electronic business and trade facilitation for regional development.
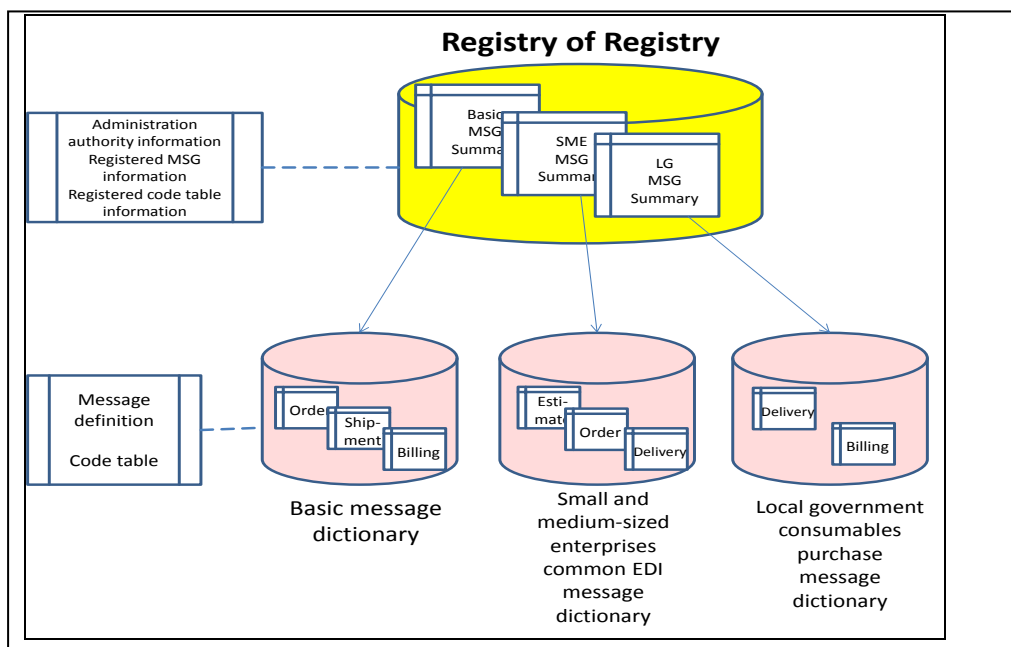
II.   Asia Pacific Council for trade facilitation and electronic business (AFACT): Plenary meeting, November 2013

3.   AFACT is positioned to play a very important role in promoting trade by integrating electronic business through the uses of international standards and best practices − especially those developed and promoted by UN/CEFACT − in the Asia Pacific region. A majority of active members of AFACT continued to pursue joint activities beneficial for all the member countries. All look forward to developing ways and means both to help each other in collaboration on e-commerce and to increase adaptability and flexibility in a non-political environment. As of 2013, AFACT had 19 members from Afghanistan, Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Province of China,
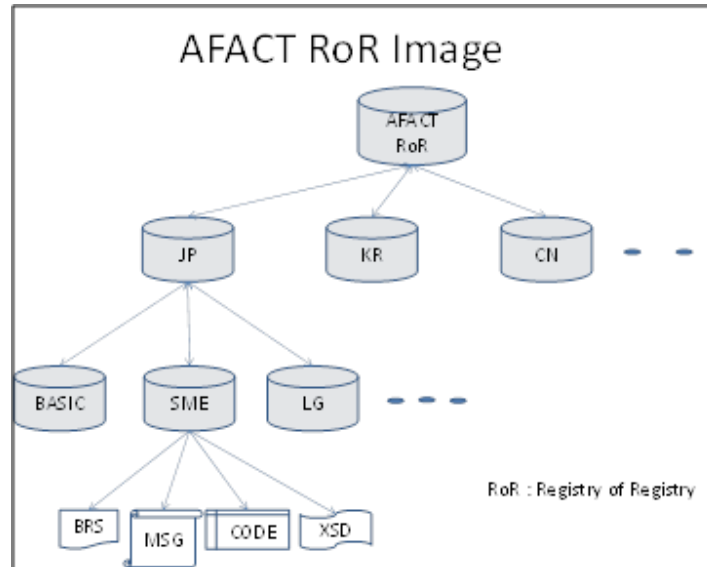
Thailand, Vietnam and one associate member (Pan Asian e-Commerce Alliance (PAA), together with official cooperation with UN/ESCAP.

The structure of AFACT is as follows.

(a) A Plenary is held annually where all members may attend and decide the key issues;

(b) A Steering committee (StC) manages and coordinates AFACT activities;

(c) There are three Executive committees (EC): Business Domain Committee (BDC), Technology & Methodology Committee (TMC) and Community Support Committee (CSC);

(d) There are three Working Groups (WG) under BDC: ECOO (Electronic Certificate of Origin), TT&L (Travel Tourism and Leisure) and SHARP (Secured, authenticated, accountable interchange platform).

4.   The thirty-first AFACT annual meetings were held from 27-29 November 2013 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The meetings were composed of Executive Committees and Working Groups meetings on 27 November, a Steering Committee meeting on 28 November, and a Plenary meeting on 29 November. The 2013 eASIA Awards ceremony and EDICOM 2013 were also held on 29 November.

5.   Participants: 8 Countries (India, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Province of China, Thailand and Viet Nam (hosting member)) and UN/ESCAP.

6.   The Rapporteur made a presentation on recent activities of projects in UN/CEFACT.

7.   With regard to promoting UN/CEFACT CCL utilization for cross industries in Asian Countries, the TMC discussed the basis of a White Paper for UN/CEFACT CCL Utilization in Japan (written in English) which will be published on the AFACT website.
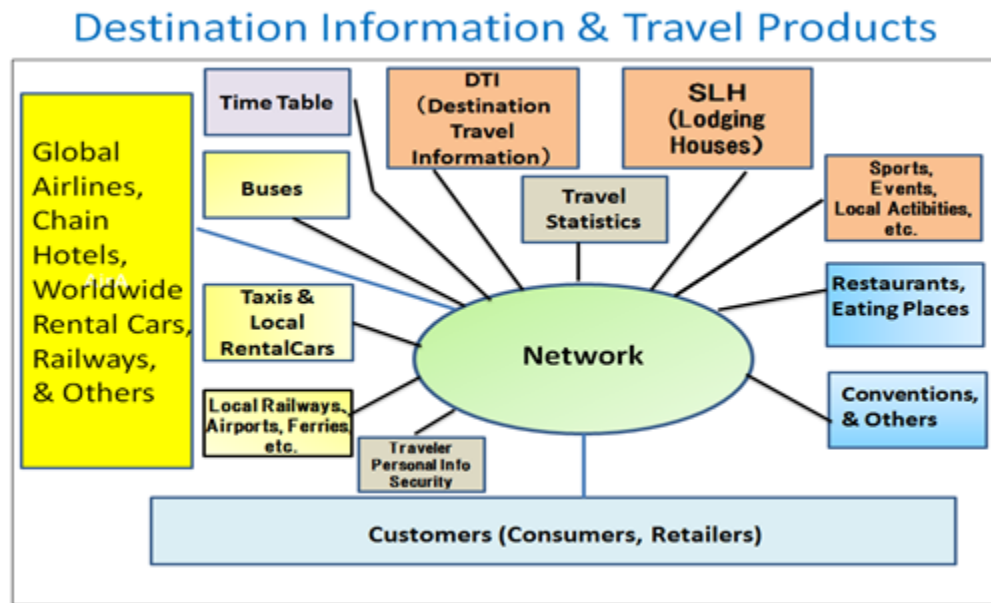
Also the idea of an 'AFACT Registry of Registry' (ROR) for cross industry interoperability was discussed. This ROR will be necessary for practical management when message dictionaries of various industries increase and especially in cases where plural countries may become operational in the near future. The pilot case of ROR in Japan will be introduced in the next AFACT mid-term meeting.

8.	'Trusted Communication Platform for Electronic Documents ', a new project of ISO TC/154. The SHARP W/G opened a group for sharing and receiving comments from AFACT members about "Trusted Communication Platform for Electronic Documents". This project was accepted as a WG1 PWI in ISO TC/154. Korea will provide some open sources regarding its platform to AFACT members and will operate its open source communities on the website. Korea and Iran will try to develop a case implementation of its platform.

9.	'Management of e-identity for cross borders', a new proposal to UN/CEFACT: representative of the Republic of Korea explained the approach of the 'e-identity' project presented at the UN/CEFACT forum in Sardinia. It was confirmed in AFACT BDC that this will be a working item in this committee.

10.	'Destination Travel Information (DTI)', a new project of UN/CEFACT: the AFACT TT&L working group will proceed with the Small Scaled Lodging House (SLH) international pilot project based on UN/CEFACT specification as well as development of UN/CEFACT specification of DTI. The scope is that both products will be linked as shown in the following chart.

Destination Information & Travel Products

11.   Cloud Computing Working Group: a new working group, Cloud Computing, was proposed by Taiwan, Province of China and discussed in Technology & Methodology Committee (TMC). The standards are mainly developed by DMTF (Distributed Management Task Force) and OASIS Topology and Orchestration Specification for Cloud Application(TOSCA) with a focus on migrating applications and services to a standard-compliant cloud environment and between different cloud infrastructures to avoid vendor lock-in and enable cloud application and service providers with "AppStore" in the future. The deliverables will include:

• Definition of Open Virtualization Format (OVF) for selected applications;

• Pilot projects packaged for cloud migration interoperability using OVF;

• Guidelines for utilizing OVF.

12.   Single Window and e-Customs practices in AFACT: the Communication Support Committee (CSC) is continually collecting the status of Single Window and e-Customs implementation in AFACT. Currently, the relevant information from Japan, Iran, Republic of Korea, Republic of Singapore and Taiwan, Province of China, are posted on the AFACT website.

13.   UNESCAP activities report:

• Mr. Sangwon Lim, from UNESCAP, made a presentation about the following activities and updates of his organization.

Major ESCAP events in 2013

• Regional Workshop in Global supply chain integration regarding issues in cross-border Paperless trade. (Bangkok, Thailand, 10-11 July 2013);

• Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2013 (Beijing, China, 10-11 Sept.2013);

• ESCAP-WCO UNNExT Masterclass 2013.

Two week intensive training on paperless trade and Single Window (Cheon-an, Republic of Korea, 7-18 October 2013 (with the Korean Customs)

• ESCAP Trade and Investment Week (Bangkok, Thailand 18-22 November 2013), Back-to-back with 2nd Global Trade Facilitation Conference (Bangkok, Thailand 18-19 November 2013)[1].

ESCAP Work Programmes and Projects

- • Implementation of ESCAP Resolution 68/3:

    - • Regional study completed, with subsequent expert review, Mar-May 2013).

    - • Member consultation in the months of July and September (Three Sub-regional meetings and one Regional meeting)[2].

- • Cross-border Business Process Analysis (BPA) Study in South Asia:

    - • Completed study along 3 corridors across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

    - • Phase 2 of the study (BPA+) Inception Workshop (26-27 November 2013)[3].

- • Capacity building support to developing member countries:

    - • Advisory service on BPA and Single Window implementation.

    - • Primary focus on LDCs and LLDCs; Cambodia, Mongolia, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal etc.

- • UNNExT

    - • Advisory groups on implementation of ESCAP Resolution 68/3 ad Agricultural trade Facilitation.

ESCAP Work Programmes in 2014

- • Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2014 (Thailand, September-October 2014).

- • UNNExT Masterclass 2014.

- • BPA+: On-going implementation.

- • UNNExT: Advisory groups on SMEs and Transit Facilitation.

- • Implementation of ESCAP Resolution 68/3: On-going.

14. 2013 eASIA Awards: the eASIA Awards are administrated by AFACT. The event is held every two years and is aimed at promoting the achievement of member countries in the development of trade facilitation, electronic business and activities. The purpose is to recognize the significance of efforts made to encourage exchange of best practices. The following are the winners in each of the four categories.

- • Trade Facilitation:

    Electronic Bank Realization Certificate by Directorate General Foreign Trade, Govt. of India.

- • e-Business in Public Sector:

    Building and deploying electronic customs clearance system by FPT Information System (Viet Nam).

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[1] http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/gtfc13.asp .

[2] http://www.unescap.org/tid/reso683.asp .

[3] http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/ttf-sasec.asp .

- e-Business in Private sector:

  The best practice of Secure Mobile Payment for Electronic Business by CyberSoft Digital Services Corp. (Taiwan, Province of China).

- Bridging digital divide:

  The APEC Digital Opportunity Centre Project by Institute for Information Industry (Taiwan, Province of China).

III. Regional Workshop on SASEC Program (October 2013)

15.   The South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, whose members are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, held a Regional Workshop on National Trade Facilitation Committees on 9-10 October 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The workshop was jointly supported by the Asian Development Bank and UNCTAD. This forum focused on sharing international best practices in implementing national trade facilitation committees and contributed to both the on-going work of the SASEC Trade Facilitation Working Group, and specific requirements of the SASEC Trade Facilitation Program (currently under implementation in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal).

16.   The Rapporteur was invited to make a presentation on the case of JASTPRO in Japan as National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) defined in the UNECE Recommendation N°4. Additionally, Mr. Jari Salo, Mr. Javaid Mansoor and Mr. Graziano Severini made presentations on the cases of NTFC in Finland, Pakistan and Italy, respectively.

17.   The delegations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, each presented on their current situation and at the final session each presented on their trade facilitation action plan.

18.   UNCTAD officers made presentations on current approach of UNECE and UNCTAD in disseminating the effectiveness of NTFC in countries to promote trade facilitation. The article about NTFC in the draft WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement was also referenced in this presentation (this article moved from a 'Recommendation' to a 'Binding Obligation' after the WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali). The WTO Bali Ministerial Conference concluded on 7 December with an agreement on trade facilitation.

IV. Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2013 (September 2013)

19.   The Rapporteur participated in the APTFF held by UNESCAP and Asian Development Bank on 10-11 September 2013 in Beijing, China.

20.   The annual Forum was the 5th Forum held.

21.   The title of the Forum was "Towards more efficient and inclusive supply chains: public and private sector perspectives". Experiences of developed countries were shared and there was a particular focus on developing countries, landlocked developing countries and the lease developed countries.

22.   Participants: more than 170 members from 37 UN/ESCAP member countries.

23.   Through panel sessions and exhibitions participants shared good experiences and best practices. In addition to sessions on trade logistics, paperless trade and single window,

a session of 'Trade Finance' was newly added in this Forum to take into consideration the increasing importance of this area for growing global supply chain.

V. Conclusion

24.   The region continues its strong commitment to the implementation of paperless trading and electronic business. UN/CEFACT needs to continue its engagement with regional bodies in the Asia and the Pacific to coordinate regional inputs with its development and delivery of global instruments.

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