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Strategic Framework and Programme of work

United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Programme of Work 2015 – 2016

Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau for decision

Summary

This document presents the Programme of Work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) for 2015-2016.

It is submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau to the twenty-first session of the Plenary for discussion and approval.

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I. Introduction

1. This document presents the Programme of Work (PoW) of the UN/CEFACT for 2015-2016¹.
2. It is submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau to the twenty-first session of the Plenary for discussion and approval; and for subsequent approval by the UNECE Executive Committee.
3. It is consistent with the streamlined project-oriented management approach adopted at the Plenary's eighteenth session in February 2012 and the associated revised foundational document "UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.5). The PoW for 2015-2016 also aligns with the draft document "A strategic framework for UN/CEFACT activities" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2015/7).
4. Activities are driven by the expressed needs of the member States and the recommendations of the UNECE Executive Committee for UN/CEFACT.

II. Key elements of UN/CEFACT's vision and mandate

5. UN/CEFACT's vision is "Simple, Transparent and Effective Processes for Global Commerce".
6. Within the United Nations framework under the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe serves as the focal point for trade facilitation recommendations and electronic business standards, covering both commercial and government business processes that can foster growth in international trade and related services. In this context, UN/CEFACT was established, as a subsidiary, inter-governmental body of the UNECE, mandated to develop a programme of work of global relevance to achieve improved worldwide coordination and cooperation in these areas.
7. UN/CEFACT supports activities dedicated to improving the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transition 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 contributing to the growth of global trade.
8. UN/CEFACT provides an opportunity for public and private sector experts to work together under the guidance of its Plenary and Bureau to develop a body of freely available recommendations and standards that can help reduce regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. Its experts conduct projects within Plenary-approved programmes of work, using an

¹ Several documents provided important input for drafting the current PoW, e.g., "UN/CEFACT structure, mandate and terms of reference" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.5), "United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Programme of Work 2014" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2014/8), "Towards an integrated strategy for UN/CEFACT" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2006/5), "A strategic framework for UN/CEFACT activities" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2014/7), "The way forward for UN/CEFACT" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2014/Misc. 2) and the draft "Report of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business on its twentieth session" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2014/2).

open development process, and respecting an intellectual property rights policy and a code of conduct.

III. Strategic Framework and Key Activities

9. The framework within which progress is made toward achieving the UN/CEFACT vision and fulfilling its mandate is based upon the following strategic activities: identify and analyse constraints; develop and maintain Recommendations and Standards; promote; and cooperate, coordinate and collaborate. Key aspects of UN/CEFACT's approach to the implementation of these key activities are briefly outlined below:²

A. Identify and analyse constraints

10. Identify, analyse and understand regulatory and procedural obstacles and constraints in international processes, procedures and transactions and work for their elimination or reduction. As part of this process it is important to collect information on possible work in progress or existing recommendations and standards that may have relevance in responding to requirements, in order to avoid duplication of effort and to explore how these might be included or referenced in UN/CEFACT deliverables.

B. Develop and maintain Recommendations and Standards

11. Develop and maintain UN recommendations and global standards to address the above constraints and facilitate processes, procedures and transactions, including the relevant use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Given its end-to-end focus on the full supply chain of steps involved in cross-border trade, UN/CEFACT will seek to ensure that such standards are interoperable throughout all domains and, where possible, with other organisations' standards. All levels of interoperability will be taken into account, to the extent possible, with the primary focus being on semantics and business processes.

C. Promote

12. Promote the use of UN/CEFACT recommendations and standards and associated best practices in the field of trade facilitation and electronic business, especially through channels such as government, industry and service associations

D. Cooperate, coordinate and collaborate

13. UN/CEFACT works closely with the secretariat to enhance cooperation with international organizations involved in trade facilitation, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and other relevant United Nations organisations.

14. UN/CEFACT also works closely with the secretariat to engage with other organisations in order to foster a coherent set of relevant globally-oriented freely available recommendations and standards. In particular, this involves coordinating its work - and, where appropriate, collaborating - with other international, intergovernmental, non-

² See document "A strategic framework for UN/CEFACT activities" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2015/7).

governmental bodies, standards development organisations, fora and consortia. This includes the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially in the context of the ISO/IEC/ITU/UNECE Memorandum of Understanding on electronic business. These relationships have been established and maintained in recognition of the broad application that UN/CEFACT's work has in areas beyond global commerce and the key objectives of interoperability between applications and the ability to support multilingual environments.

IV. Programme of Work for 2015-2016

15. During the past decade there has been an increasing level of interest from national, regional and international perspectives on trade facilitation and electronic business, particularly following global and regional agreements on the matter. Working together to create recommendations and standards is seen as bringing potentially significant benefits – on a voluntary as well as a mandated basis. Moreover, the spotlight is focused on timely, coordinated responses to priority needs that are related to implementations with deadlines.

16. UN/CEFACT will build on its strengths in bringing public and private sector experts together to address the next generation of requirements in trade facilitation and electronic business needed around the world. This will be achieved through the timely use of its methodologies, open development process, intellectual property rights policy and streamlined project-oriented organisational structure to serve governments and business in achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness within and across borders.

17. The focus areas of the PoW for 2015-2016 which are articulated below are subject-matter oriented and, at the same time, are consistent with activities included in the strategic framework of UN/CEFACT activities. By taking this approach, it is possible to streamline the presentation of the PoW and to bring to the attention of the Plenary and the Executive Committee the kinds of substantive work that experts are likely to address. It is hoped that this will encourage discussion and guidance on any matters of importance as part of the approval process.

18. Overall, the key focus areas of the PoW for 2015-2016 demonstrate the following:

- an emphasis on efforts to identify, develop or revise trade facilitation **recommendations**
- a priority focus on efforts to advance the development of technology-neutral **semantics and interoperability**
- an openness to member States and stakeholders wishing to address requirements in trade facilitation and electronic business that can take full advantage of UN/CEFACT's family of standards (“**one-stop-shop**”).

A. Focus area I: International trade procedures

19. A wide range of activities will be conducted in the area of international trade procedures during 2015-2016. Current research activities suggest several potential recommendation projects for consideration and a number of existing recommendations that may benefit from review and possible revision. These include:

A.1 Development and revision of recommendations that support the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

- Recommendation on Single Window Interoperability;
- Revision of Recommendation 4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies;
- Revision/Consolidation of Recommendation 18 on Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures;
- Recommendation on Public-Private-Partnership in Trade Facilitation;
- Recommendation on Consultation Approaches;
- Trusted Trader in Other Government Agencies.

A.2 Revision of key recommendations which are in need of updating

- Recommendation 8 - Unique Identification Code Methodology (in partnership with the WCO and their Unique Consignment Reference);
- Recommendation 1 - United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents (updating the introduction);
- Identification of other recommendations which could use updating (e.g., including Recommendation 6 - Aligned Invoice Layout Key for International Trade, Recommendation 13 - Facilitation of Identified Legal Problems in Import Clearance Procedures, Recommendation 22 - Layout Key for Standard Consignment Instructions and Recommendation 27 - Preshipment Inspection).

A.3 Development of new recommendations on other key aspects of international trade with current relevance

- Multi-modal trade corridors
- Mobile Business
- Cloud Computing
- Trade Recovery / Relief

A.4 Updating and expansion of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG)**A.5 A symposium on single window semantic interoperability is also envisaged within the period.****B. Focus Area II: Regulatory**

20. Work in the regulatory area spans accounting and audit, customs, environmental management and government. Some of the subject-matter topics to be taken up during 2015-2016 will likely include:

- Efficient Journal Book Methods
- Dangerous goods declarations
- Globally harmonized system of classification and labelling of chemicals
- Material Safety Data Sheet
- Registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals

- Transboundary movements of waste messages (Basel Convention)
- Regulatory aspects of digitally signed certificates
- Ensuring legally significant trusted transboundary electronic interactions

21. The last two topics mentioned have cross-domain significance as they concern challenging cross-border issues involving “reliability, trust and identity”, which are difficult in their own right to define but, simply stated, concern how well you know your counterparty.

C. Focus Area III: Supply Chain

22. Work in the supply chain area covers a wide range of subject-matter topics, including finance and payments, procurement, transport and logistics and supply chain management. During 2015-2016 at least the following are planned to be addressed:

- Purchase Order Financing
- Trade Finance / Supply Chain Finance
- Cross Industry supply chain
- Electronic Tendering
- Contract Financial Execution Management
- Traceability within the textile supply chain
- Common Framework for Freight Information Exchange
- Multi Modal Transport Reference Model
- Electronic Cargo Data Exchange in B2B logistics
- Roll-on Roll-off Traffic Maritime Deep Sea and Short Sea

23. In the field of government procurement, legislative developments in Europe are focusing on semantic interoperability. Possible steps during 2015-2016 may involve bringing this work to the international stage at UN/CEFACT, where experts from around the world can then join with their European colleagues. This could help to ensure that the initiative can open markets and stimulate growth in trade, especially for small and medium enterprises, around the world. Another possible step might be to also encourage participation from the UN Office of Procurement, Multilateral Development Banks and other international organisations.

D. Focus Area IV: Sectoral

24. Sectoral subject-matter topics during 2015-2016 may cover the following in agriculture, insurance, travel and tourism and utilities:

- Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange
- Electronic laboratory observation report for agriculture
- Electronic Crop Data Sheet
- Traceability of livestock, animals and fish
- SmartAgrimatics and eFoodChain
- Electronic certification and authentication

- Insurance messages
- Utility management systems in a deregulated energy market
- Small scale lodging house and travel destination data exchange

25. Traceability in sectoral and other areas is an important cross-domain cross-border concept and efforts will be made to foster coherence in addressing it, especially with a priority focus on semantic interoperability and common business processes.

E. Focus Area V: Methodology and Technology

26. Methodology and technology topics for 2015-2016 include:

- Conformance statements on technical and business standards
- Maintenance of UN/CEFACT Libraries
- Business Standards Procedures
- Mobile devices
- Semantic Interoperability

27. In the case of conformance statements, they will need to be performed in a factual manner by establishing a precise and consistent terminology and including clear conformance clauses for every standard and technical specification. UN/CEFACT could also establish, possibly in cooperation with other organisations, a conformance registry where users and Standards Development Organisations could make their self-declaration of conformance visible.

28. In terms of the Maintenance of UN/CEFACT Libraries, there is a need to better align the different libraries under the auspices of UN/CEFACT, such as the Core Component Library, UN/EDIFACT and UNTDED. Methodologies and the frequency and procedures of publications need to be revised to ensure interoperability. Moreover, all aspects of UNLOCODE maintenance and future developments need to be carefully reviewed.

29. With respect to Business Standards Procedures, they need to be established with respect to the latest versions of the Core Component Technical Specification (CCTS) and XML Naming and Design Rules (NDR). This includes rules for harmonization of core components and verification of libraries as well as definition of the publication bundle.

30. Turning to mobile devices, their increasing use in the field of international trade needs to be explored and an impact analysis needs to be performed on existing UN/CEFACT standards and what new ones may require development.

31. Finally, semantic interoperability is a key area of interest. A proof of concept carried out by the MoU Management Group for eBusiness (MoU MG) could be evaluated with respect to UN/CEFACT methodologies and technical specifications.

F. Focus Area VI: Support

32. Two key support topics are also included as activities for 2015-2016:

- Communication
- Maintenance

33. In the case of communication, it remains a priority in collaboration with the secretariat, which manages the website. Communication activities needs to be enhanced both within and outside UN/CEFACT and can be fostered through Bureau Programme Support activities.

34. With respect to maintenance, efforts need to continue with the support of experts and the secretariat on a range of tasks and initiatives involving UN/EDIFACT, Code Lists, the Core Component Library and XML schema. In particular, the secretariat will engage with experts on UNLOCODE maintenance processes and opportunities for their strengthening.
