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COMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE

Working Party on Facilitation of
International Trade Procedures
(Forty-fourth session, 16-20 September 1996)

REPORT OF THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON FACILITATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE PROCEDURES

1. The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures held its forty-fourth session in Geneva from 16 to 20 September 1996 under the chairmanship of Mr. T. Blomfeldt (FINLAND). During the session of the Working Party, a Meeting of Experts on Data Elements and Automatic Data Interchange (GE.1, fifty-fourth session) was held on 16 and 17 September 1996, a Meeting of Experts on Procedures and Documentation (GE.2, fifty-fourth session) was held on 18 March 1996, and a Joint Meeting of GE.1 and GE.2 was held on 19 September 1996.

2. The session was attended by representatives from: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

3. The session was attended by representatives of the European Union (EU).

4. Representatives from: Australia, Brazil, Gabon, Japan, Korea, participated under Article 11 of the Commission's terms of reference.

5. The session was also attended by representatives of the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), as well as by representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The

following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Express Carriers Conference (IECC), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (S.W.I.F.T.), and the United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation. Also present at the invitation of the secretariat was a representative of the International Federation of Inspection Agencies (IFIA)and of the North American Trade Procedures Organization (NATPRO) .

Item 1 - Statement by the Executive Secretary of the ECE

6. The Executive Secretary noted that the United Nations was undergoing a restructuring process with a view to enhancing its work in times of declining budgetary resources. In consultation with member states, the ECE had reevaluated its priorities and made it clear that both Trade Facilitation and the work of WP.4 were both highly appreciated and of high priority. This was due to their global relevance, the intersectorial nature of trade facilitation and the fact that trade facilitation helped to improve competitiveness both at national and business levels.

7. Further, he explained that rapid changes in information technologies were increasing the competitive edge of countries that were well equipped to use modern trade facilitation techniques. There was a threat that developing countries and countries in transition would be left behind in this development. Therefore, he emphasized that action was necessary to increase the involvement of all countries in the development and implementation of trade facilitation measures, to assist countries in transition and developing countries in eliminating obstacles to the introduction of electronic data interchange (EDI) and to enable SMEs to use modern trade facilitation techniques more effectively.

8. Commenting on the proposal to re-engineer the Working Party, the Executive Secretary noted that the progress achieved in trade facilitation had made the proposal timely and it responded to the demands of users, member states and the United Nations. The proposed new "Centre" would better recognize the need for modern integrated trade facilitation techniques and the worldwide relevance of the work as evidenced by the large number of non-ECE member countries attending the WP.4 sessions. He stressed that a decision ought to be taken at the present session in order to not lose momentum and to allow the UN/ECE Commission to adequately handle the re-engineering process. He encouraged the Working Party to continue work on the substance of its activities and keep the innovative role which had so far characterized WP.4.

9. Noting the vacant posts in the Trade Facilitation Section and the requests for additional resources to meet the demand created by UN/EDIFACT standards development and the work on procedures and documentation, the Executive Secretary stated that he would fill the vacant posts and try to obtain additional staff for the work on procedures and documentation.

Item 2 - Matters arising from the re-engineering process of the Working Party

Documents:
- TRADE/WP.4/R.1234 Recommendations for the Establishment of CEFACT
- Draft Trade/WP.4/R.1234/Corr.1 Draft Corrigendum
- TRADE/WP.4/CRP.122 WP.4 Proposal for Migration Plan
- TRADE/WP.4/CRP.122/Rev.1 WP.4 Proposal for Migration Plan

10. The Chairman summarized the developments in the re-engineering process and recalled that the re-engineering decision taken by the Working Party with regard to its future strategy had been endorsed by the Committee on the Development of Trade at its forty-fourth session and had been well received by the UN/ECE Commission at its annual session in April 1996.

11. He recalled that pending issues were related to the implementation of these decisions including the development of procedures, a structure and a programme of work. Therefore, the Bureau had developed a final proposal for the establishment of the "Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT) contained in document TRADE/WP.4/R.1234.1/

12. The Working Party discussed in depth document TRADE/WP.4/R.1234 (Recommendations for the Establishment of CEFACT). Commenting on the document, several delegations expressed their support and requested several clarifications. Members of the WP.4 Bureau provided explanations and clarifications and editorial changes were agreed upon. It was agreed to consolidate these changes, contained in document Draft TRADE/WP.4/R.1234/Corr.1 (Draft Corrigendum) and to issue a revision of document TRADE/WP.4/R.1234.

13. In order to administer an orderly and smooth transition to the new organizational structure of the "Centre", a detailed migration plan had been developed by the WP.4 Bureau (TRADE/WP.4/CRP.122/Rev.1). The Chairman explained that following the procedures laid out in the migration plan, he would appoint a nominating committee to propose candidates for the election of Plenary Officers and of members of the Steering Committee.

14. The Working Party unanimously approved the proposal contained in document TRADE/WP.4/R.1234, with the editorial changes specified in Draft TRADE/WP.4/R.1234/Corr.1, and further agreed to submit a revised document to the Committee on the Development of Trade for endorsement and approval. Furthermore, it agreed to adopt the migration plan contained in document TRADE/WP.4/CRP.122/Rev.1.

15. The Chairman congratulated the Working Party on its decision and noted that this was a historic moment as this would be the last meeting of WP.4 and the next session would be held under the auspices of CEFACT. He encouraged delegations to submit their nominations to the nominating committee, through the secretariat, in the near future and he reminded delegations that

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1/ A minor error with regard to the title of the Centre contained in TRADE/WP.4/R.1234 was called to the attention of the secretariat and after consultation with the Chair of WP.4, it was corrected in the final document as found in TRADE/R.650. The correct title was "the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport" and NOT "the Centre for Facilitation of Practices and Procedures"

nominations for Officers of the Plenary and the Steering Group should be presented to the secretariat no later than 31 January 1997.

16. He thanked the other Bureau members and delegations for their work and support during the long re-engineering process that had just been finalized.

Item 3 - Trade Facilitation and UN/EDIFACT in economies in transition

17. Representing countries in transition, Mr. Dumitrache Dima, the Vice-Chair of WP.4, opened discussion of this agenda item with several observations and recommendations concerning the priority areas for trade facilitation in central and eastern Europe.

18. The implementation of ECE Trade Facilitation Recommendation No. 4, "National Trade Facilitation Organs", which calls for the creation of national trade facilitation bodies, was essential for ensuring adequate co-ordination and communication among the various parties concerned with facilitation.

19. At the same time, Recommendation No. 4 needed to be revised to reflect the changes which had taken place in recent years. Countries with market economies as well as countries in transition, faced an increasing pressure to restrain budgets. The justification for a national trade facilitation body, commonly referred to as a "PRO" organisation, needed to be re-iterated and Member States' commitment to this concept would have to be reaffirmed.

20. The Vice-Chair emphasised that the ECE secretariat should use its influence to help decision makers at governmental level understand the important role of a trade facilitation organisation. The Regional Advisor for Trade Facilitation should intensify assistance in this area.

21. Strengthening these national bodies would also mean ensuring that they receive the necessary resources to fulfil their mission. This support should allow delegates to travel in order to participate in future CEFACT sessions. Access to the Internet and the World Wide Web had become a prerequisite. The Vice-Chair underlined that a national trade facilitation body fell under the responsibility of national authorities.

22. There was a need for a better co-operation among existing national trade facilitation committees. As an example, the Vice Chair cited the scheduling of three important meetings in Vienna, Prague and Moscow on the same dates. Co-ordination should be reinforced through the Central and East European EDIFACT Board.

23. As a final recommendation, the Vice-Chair stressed the need for synergy among trade facilitation activities. Romania had achieved synergy in this field, but this process implied the active participation of all organisations interested in trade facilitation.

24. The Regional Advisor on Trade Facilitation introduced his report to the Working Party, TRADE/WP.4/CRP.120. One of the main conclusions reached in recent months was that the WP.4 International Trade Transaction (ITT) modelling activity was one of the most effective tools for introducing trade facilitation concepts, and for drawing attention to the inter-organisational co-operation required for improvements.

25. New contributions from Romania and Hungary had improved the modelling effort initiated by the United Kingdom. An initial ITT profile for Tajikistan had been developed during a recent Regional Advisor mission. Following the recent dissolution of POLPRO, the Polish national trade facilitation organisation, Poland had also proposed to use ITT modelling to re-assess the role of trade facilitation in its national trade policy.

26. Tangible progress was achieved in the area of training and education, with the release of the “EDI and EDIFACT” module (see TRADE/WP.4/R.1222 and R.1226) developed by ESCAP with support from the ECE UN/EDIFACT Administrator. For the first time in the history of WP.4, the combined Trade Facilitation recommendations were published by the UN as Part III of the Trade Data Elements Directory, in response to a priority request from central and east European delegates.

27. Additional trade facilitation materials were made accessible through TraFIX, the Internet-based Trade Facilitation Information Exchange, notably the ECE TIR Handbook and the COTIF Convention on the Transport of Passengers and Goods by Rail.

28. A new initiative oriented towards ECE member states in transition was the development of "virtual permanent missions", in collaboration with the International Telecommunications Union. A special presentation was given to a joint GE.1 and GE.2 session by the representative of the Permanent Mission of Italy which showed how they used the Internet World Wide Web to supply information on their country. As valuable as this channel of communication could be for countries with representatives in Geneva, it would potentially be more helpful to countries which, at present, do not maintain permanent missions. This project was still under development and progress would be reported to the next session.

29. Despite financial constraints which had continued restricting the activities of the Regional Advisor, missions had been undertaken since the last WP.4 session to Poland, Hungary, Tajikistan and Romania. The last mission was made possible through the financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This was the first time that UNDP had supported the ECE Regional Advisor Services programme.

30. The Regional Advisor expressed his appreciation of the co-operation received from the Central and Eastern European EDIFACT Board, as well as the EUROPROS Subgroup on Central and Eastern European Countries in Transition.

31. The delegation of Austria drew the attention of the Working Party to the Sixth International EDI Symposium which was being organized by AUSTRIAPRO on 17-18 October 1996. Traditionally, this conference has been oriented towards the interests of central European participants; this year, five out of the fifteen speakers were from countries in transition.

32. The Bulgarian delegation expressed its appreciation of the Regional Advisor’s efforts to implement new communication channels for disseminating WP.4 information, which was of vital importance to experts and interested individuals not able to take part in the sessions of the Working Party.

33. The Russian Federation thanked the Vice-Chair for his comments on the importance of a good co-ordination. Although not an easy task, it was recognized that efforts had to be made in that direction.

34. The delegation from the Czech Republic reported on the implemention of ECE Trade Facilitation Recommendation No. 4, through FITPRO, the Czech national trade facilitation body. They thanked the secretariat for its excellent work and the Regional Advisor for his support, in particular for making trade facilitation materials available through TraFIX. At present, the Czech Republic had over 27000 small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in import and export. Disseminating information to a wider audience was essential for future progress in trade facilitation.

35. The Polish delegation thanked the Regional Advisor for his very active participation in the national EDI conference held last June. This participation helped to better understand national needs and improved the focus on future activities.

Item 4 - Matters arising from the fifty-fourth session of the Meeting of Experts on Data Elements and Automatic Data Interchange (GE.1)

36. The Chairman of the Meeting of Experts on procedures and documentation presented the report of the fifty-fourth session of the Meeting as contained in document TRADE/WP.4/GE.1/105.

37. On the basis of the proposals presented by GE.1, the Working Party agreed on the points summarized below:

Technical issues and reports

38. WP.4 adopted the following GE.1 resolution regarding parts 5 and 6 of version 4 of the EDIFACT syntax:

GE.1 resolves to progress the adoption of parts 5 and 6 of version 4 of the syntax as follows:

- The Syntax Development Group (SDG) is instructed at its next meeting (16-20 December 1996), to review any editorial comments received on parts 5 and 6 of the syntax (as found in TRADE/WP.4/R.1245 and TRADE/WP.4/R.1246) and to add a matrix of valid code combinations in annex as recommended in TRADE/WP.4/CRP.105;

- The document produced by SDG shall then be transmitted by the WP.4 secretariat to ISO, as an existing standard, to be processed by ISO for fast track procedure;

- Any outstanding substantive comments will be input to the ISO process.

39. WP.4 approved the Interactive Message Design Guidelines (TRADE/WP.4/R.1237).

40. With regard to Ad hoc Group 1 (AC.1), WP.4 approved that:
- AC.1 be the deciding party for distribution of its documents,
- AC.1 hold informative meetings with JRT participants at upcoming JRTs,
- the new name of AC.1 read "AC.1 - Research, Strategic Advice and Implementation Planning."

41. WP.4 noted recommendation 4 of the AC.1 report (TRADE/WP.4/CRP.97):

> "That in the event of the approval of the Re-engineering effort and the establishment of CEFACT, that CEFACT establish, support and coordinate a formal quality management program."

and the recommendation from GE.1 to give this issue serious consideration from a management point of view.

42. WP.4 approved to change the name of the "Message Design Guidelines Group" to the "Message Design Rules Group".

UN/EDIFACT directories and documentation

43. WP.4 approved the D.96B UN/EDIFACT directory.

44. WP.4 approved that the Directory Audit Team (DAT), the Directory Production Team (DPT) and the secretariat coordinate their efforts so as to introduce a new identifier for data elements in the publication of the D.97A directory. The purpose of this identifier would be to distinguish between data elements used only for batch EDI, those used only for Interactive EDI and those used in both batch and interactive EDI. This identifier was needed in order to ensure more careful management of the maintenance of common data elements.

International Standardization Affecting Trade Interchange

45. WP.4 approved that the Standards Liaison Team (SLT) be allowed to submit detailed comments on inconsistencies in the DIS ballot version of the revised "Open-EDI Reference Model," to JTC1/SC30 in its name, providing copies of those comments should be provided to both the secretariat and the GE.1 Chair as per the SLT's terms of reference.

46. WP.4 approved the renewal of the MoU with ISO for a longer period than the two years originally agreed. This renewal would have to take into consideration the new CEFACT structure. It further approved that, in-between sessions, this issue be managed by the EDIFACT Steering Group (ESG) which would report to the March 1997 session and, between sessions, to the WP.4 Chair.

47. With regard to the joint ECE/ISO Basic Semantic Repository (BSR) project, WP.4 confirmed its support for free access to Basic Semantic Units (BSUs).

UN/EDIFACT Policy and Promotion

48. WP.4 approved the submission of Recommendation 25 to ECOSOC for approval as a UN Recommendation. The secretariat undertook to investigate the necessary steps for this process and to report back to the next session.

Regional Developments

49. WP.4 noted with interest the following documents which the Regional EDIFACT Rapporteurs had submitted for information:

TRADE/WP.4/CRP.94	(Recent developments in UN/EDIFACT: regional reports),
TRADE/WP.4/CRP.114	(Recent Regional Developments: Colombia),
TRADE/WP.4/CRP.118	(Recent Progress of Trade Facilitation and UN/EDIFACT in the Central and Eastern European Countries),
TRADE/WP.4/CRP.121	(EDIFACT Report from Hungary).

50. WP.4 further noted the report of the delegation of the United States that the Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 161-2, which strongly encouraged the use of UN/EDIFACT in government procurement, had recently been approved.

Other Issues

51. Regarding the migration to CEFACT, WP.4 agreed that current structures should stay in place until a full migration strategy and new structures had been decided upon and enacted.

52. In his conclusion, the GE.1 Chair warmly thanked two outgoing Rapporteurs: the Pan American EDIFACT Board Rapporteur, Raul Colcher (Brazil), noting his important contribution to the UN/EDIFACT process during the preceeding three years, and the Convenor of the Multilingualism and Terminology (MLT) Group, Mr. Yvan Lauzon (Canada).

Item 5 - Matters arising from the fifty-fourth session of the Meeting of Experts on Procedures and Documentation (GE.2)

53. The Chairman of the Meeting of Experts on Procedures and Documentation presented the report of the fifty-fourth session of the Meeting, contained in document TRADE/WP.4/GE.2/105. He reported on the progress made on several items related to GE.2 activities.

Programme of work and priorities

54. WP.4 noted the GE.2 discussion on the future Programme of work for CEFACT and on cooperation with international organizations. A proposal from the delegation of the United Kingdom on the use of ITT Modelling methods for establishing programme elements was also noted.

Analysis of the International Trade transaction

55. WP.4 approved the activities undertaken by the Steering group of the Maintenance Agency for the International Trade Transaction (ITT) modelling. It was decided that these activities would be continued in close cooperation with GE.1 experts and more experts would be invited to become members of the Steering group. It was noted that the Steering group had successfully used the World Wide Web network for the promotion of ITT Modelling and other areas

of trade facilitation work. The need for further development of the aligned international trade documents systems was underlined, especially for countries in transition which, in many cases, used it as a first step for the introduction of EDI.

Implementation of ECE/FAL Recommendations

56. WP.4 agreed to introduce an item on the development of a methodology for estimating costs and benefits of trade facilitation in the future Programme of work; an appropriate working group might be included in the CEFACT structure.

Recommendation No.4 "National Trade Facilitation Organizations"

57. WP.4 agreed that contact information, including E-mail addresses, on National Trade Facilitation Bodies be maintained regularly by the secretariat.

Recommendation No.10 "Codes for ships' names"

58. WP.4 approved the revised version of the Recommendation presented by ICS in document TRADE/WP.4/R.1253, and requested the secretariat to to issue it in the official format.

Recommendation No.16 "UN/LOCODE - Codes for Ports and other Locations"

59. WP.4 noted with satisfaction the widespread support for the work on UN/LOCODE and the need to provide for continued work through appropriate arrangements, e.g. by convening an ad hoc Working group of interested experts in the framework of CEFACT.

Recommendation No.17 "PAYTERMS - Abbreviations for Terms of Payment"

60. WP.4 agreed that the activity on the revision of this Recommendation would be maintained in the framework of CEFACT by an ad hoc working group with participation of the delegations from Romania, Austria, France, Belgium, Norway and the secretariat.

Recommendation No.18 "Facilitation measures related to international trade procedures"

61. WP.4 decided to establish an ad hoc CEFACT Working group including representatives from the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, France, Romania, Germany, IFIA, the secretariat and the EU to examine the issue of preshipment inspection. It was also decided to inform the WTO of WP.4 activities related to the review of the implementation of the Agreement on PSI (see an approved communication to WTO in the annex to this report).

Recommendation No.21 "Codes for types of cargo, packages and packaging materials"

62. WP.4 agreed to request the secretariat to amend Annex I and II of the Recommendation on the basis of document TRADE/WP.4/R.1263, Proposal by the delegation of Germany for amendments to Annex I and II of Recommendation No.21 "Codes for types of cargo, packages and packaging materials", and to submit them for approval by the next session of GE.2 in March 1997.

Revision of the Kyoto Convention

63. WP.4 decided that the delegation of the Netherlands, with the collaboration of Sweden and the WCO, would prepare terms of reference and a mandate for an ad hoc CEFACT Working group on the revision of the Kyoto Convention for the March 1997 session.

Publication of ECE/WP.4 Recommendations

64. To promote the implementation of ECE/WP.4 Recommendations, especially in countries in transition and, in some cases their amendment, WP.4 noted the publication by the secretariat of all 26 Recommendations approved by WP.4 since 1973.

Item 6 - Matters arising from the joint session on legal matters of the Meeting of Experts on Data Elements and Automatic Data Interchange and the Meeting of Experts on Procedures and Documentation

Documents:
TRADE/WP.4/CRP.102 Legal Rapporteurs Report

65. One of the Legal Rapporteurs presented the report on the joint legal session of GE.1 and GE.2 and the Working Party took note of the Legal Rapporteurs' Report (TRADE/WP.4/CRP.102) on activities since March 1996.

66. The Working Party took note, as work in progress, of the project "Electronic Authentication- Defining electronic messages and their signatures". It was noted that the work had initially focused on transport law, but its scope would now be broadened to include other international conventions dealing with definitions of writings, signatures and documents in the field of international trade law.

67. The cooperation with ICC was noted, especially with reference to the ICC-E 100 project. In order to avoid duplication, it was emphasized that both bodies should have the opportunity to contribute to each other's projects.

68. The Working party took note of the TEDIC Project (Trade EDI Certification) which had been presented to the LRT at the Helsinki JRT meeting, as a follow-up to the request made by WP.4 at its previous meeting to further examine this project. The importance of the project was underlined and it was mentioned that several issues, especially security matters, remained to be addressed. Further, it was felt that this project should be included in the revised programme of work .

69. The Working Party noted that due to recent developments, including new projects and initiatives as well the re-engineering process, a new legal programme of work should be drawn up in the light of the re-engineering process.

Item 7 - Cooperation with other International bodies and organizations

70. A member of the secretariat informed WP.4 of the Intersecretariat (ECE, UNCTAD and ITC) Task Force's activities. Common projects included the publication of a brochure describing the Trade Facilitation and Efficiency work of the three organizations; joint work on UN/EDIFACT messages; a handbook on export documents; and the Trade Efficiency/Trade Facilitation event that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa 29-30 April 1996 parallel to the UNCTAD IX session. During that event, the three organization had presented their activities and participated in a round table debate.

71. Furthermore, he mentioned that the secretariat had put the Kyoto Convention and the TIR Convention on the World Wide Web to facilitate their dissemination.

72. The Chairman underlined the need to coordinate the activities between UNCTAD, UN/ECE and ITC and stressed that the UN/ECE was the standard setting body whilst UNCTAD and ITC promote standards.

73. The delegation from WCO emphasized the good cooperation between WCO and UN/ECE and thanked the secretariat for publishing the Kyoto Convention on the World Wide Web.

Item 8 - Recent progress at the national, regional or international levels

74. The delegation from Australia gave an update on the activities within APEC and noted the fast adoption and implementation of UN/EDIFACT by customs agencies in the region.

Item 9 - Programme and organization of work and priorities

75. The Chairman explained that items under this agenda item had been discussed in connection with the re-engineering debate. No further discussion took place.

Item 10 - Other business
Documents:

TRADE/WP.4/CRP.116 Proposal on How to Enhance the WP.4 Documentation Services

76. The Norwegian delegation introduced their proposal to Enhance the ECE/WP.4 Documentation Services (TRADE/WP.4/CRP.116) which suggested that the secretariat make all documentation available on CD-ROM.

77. The delegate from Norway reported on discussions held by the ad hoc group established to increase the efficiency of WP.4 documentation services, noting the many advantages linked to the distribution of CD-ROMs containing TRAFIX material, WP.4 documentation and other information relating to trade facilitation, especially for countries where access to the Internet World Wide Web was costly and difficult.

78. The secretariat explained that contacts had been made and investigations would be furthered taking into account the budgetary situation. The secretariat also stressed the usefulness of such a service and noted that, given the tight deadlines for conference documentation, the CD-ROM should contain reference and archive material. Several delegations supported the production of CD-ROMs and agreed with the secretariat's view point. It was also stressed that in the short and medium-term, although documents should be published on the Internet World Wide Web, the production of paper documents should not be discontinued.

79. Several delegations also urged the secretariat to provide better technical facilities in the meeting room to facilitate the use of computers during sessions. Interest was also voiced as to having diskettes with the latest Conference Room Papers available prior to Meetings. The Norwegian delegation supported this request and invited delegations to participate in the work of the ad hoc group.

80. Several delegations took the floor and expressed their gratitude to the Chairman for his devoted work and effort to lead the Working Party through these last years' difficult re-engineering effort. It was mentioned that on this occasion which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of UN/EDIFACT, the activities of the Working Party had changed from a regional to a global dimension. Delegations paid tribute to the Chairman for his vision and leadership in this process.

81. The secretariat then informed delegates of the CEFACT meeting dates and deadlines for document submission:

	Deadlines	
Week beginning	Translation	Issuance as "R" Document
Monday, 17 March 1997	16 December 1996	27 January 1997
Monday, 15 September 1997	16 June 1997	28 July 1997

82. The following meeting dates for the first CEFACT meeting were approved:

17-21 March 1997

83. WP.4 confirmed the following meeting dates:

Joint Rapporteurs Team Meeting	-	21-25 April 1997, Singapore
	-	29 September - 3 October 1997, Anaheim, California (close to Los Angeles)
Ad hoc Group 1	-	18-22 Nov. 1996, Concord
	-	23-24 April 1997, Singapore
Standards Liaison Team	-	April 1997 JRT
	-	Sept./Oct. 1997 JRT
EDIFACT Steering Group	-	9 and 11-13 December 1996, Geneva
ISO 7372 Maintenance Agency	-	To be agreed
MDR Group, Draft & Edit Team	-	21-25 Oct. 1996, Hong Kong
	-	April 1996 JRT, Singapore
Syntax Development Group	-	16-20 Dec. 1996, Dublin
Legal Rapporteurs Team Group	-	April 1997 JRT
	-	Sept./Oct. 1997 JRT
Directory Production Team	-	18-22 Nov. 1996, Geneva
Directory Audit Team	-	9-13 Dec. 1996, Geneva
BSR MC Meeting	-	16 December 1996, Geneva

84. Contact information for submission of nominations to the nominating committee and for officers of CEFACT:

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Item 11 - Adoption of the report of the forty-fourth session

85. Having adopted the reports of the fifty-fourth sessions of its Meetings of Experts, GE.1 and GE.2, which contained items of substance for its approval, the Working Party agreed that the report of its forty-fourth session would be prepared by the secretariat, sent to Heads of Delegation for comments and cleared with its Chairman before circulation.

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ANNEX

WTO

Communication in relation to the review of the implementation of the Agreement on Preshipment Inspection (PSI) at the Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, December 1996

The objective of the UN/ECE Working Party 4 (WP.4) is to work for the facilitation of International Trade Procedures. In that work, the ECE produces recommendations and standards for procedures and the electronic interchange of data which are used throughout the world.

In 1981, the ECE issued Recommendation No. 18, which, in addition to recommendations on certain matters related to International Trade Procedures, also addresses Preshipment Inspection (PSI).

In relation to the review of the implementation of the agreements in the Uruguay Round, WP.4 felt it would be appropriate to inform the WTO that Recommendation No. 18 is under revision. That revision, in respect of PSI, will take into account the experience of the WTO Agreement and its implementation as well as recent developments in the use of PSI.

The provisions in the agreement for an independent review mechanism were only implemented recently through the establishment of the Independent Review Entity (IRE) and therefore, no practical experience of the work of this body exists for the moment. However, WP.4 feels that the work of this entity is an essential part of the agreement and would therefore like to pay special attention to it.

In our further work with the PSI aspects of Recommendation No. 18, WP.4 would appreciate cooperation with the WTO. It would therefore be helpful if WP.4 could be informed on the outcome of the review of the PSI Agreement at the Singapore meeting.