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Review of capacity-building activities

Report of capacity-building and implementation activities*

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides an overview of capacity-building activities carried out under the UNECE Subprogramme on Trade over the period 2010-2011. This includes activities carried out by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business¹ (UN/CEFACT); the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7); the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6); as well as the activities of the Regional Advisor.

The document is prepared in fulfilment of the Committee on Trade decision (ECE/TRADE/C/2006/18), requesting its subsidiary bodies to develop and support capacity-building activities and partnerships

* This document was submitted late due to delayed inputs.

I. Trade facilitation and electronic business

1. Consistent with its strategic objectives, the UNECE continued to promote greater participation of countries with economies in transition in the formulation of UN/CEFACT recommendations, norms and standards for trade facilitation and electronic business. UNECE also implemented a programme of training activities to assist member States, especially those with economies in transition, in implementing UN/CEFACT instruments. These activities were delivered in close cooperation with UN sister agencies and development partners, consistent with the Joint UN Regional Commission (RC) strategic direction to improve coordination and alignment of activities in the area of trade facilitation. Below is a brief overview of capacity-building activities carried out in 2010-2011.

A. Enhancing the participation of transition economies

- Two events were organized in 2010 to engage key standards-setting organizations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and national standards-setting agencies in discussions on electronic business standards. The first event took place during the UN/CEFACT Forum (September, 2010), and the second during the UN/CEFACT Plenary (December, 2010). They involved seminars for diplomats in Geneva and technical experts on the use of UN/CEFACT instruments.
- In the framework of cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Border Management Staff College (Dushanbe, Tajikistan), the secretariat prepared a training module (in English and Russian) on capacity building and awareness raising on the use of UN/CEFACT instruments, ranging from Single Windows for export and import clearance to data harmonization and electronic documents. The module has been integrated as part of the OSCE College training programme for regulatory authorities (customs, border guards, etc). Two training courses were organized (in November 2010 and in March 2011), and preparations are underway for holding three courses during 2011.

B. Training activities

3. Training activities to promote the implementation of UN/CEFACT tools and instruments involved developing training material and delivering training services to relevant public and private sector institutions. Most of these activities were undertaken within the context of the UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia Pacific (UNNExT), created jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) under a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project. UNNExT helps developing countries and economies in transition build the required capacity to ensure smooth implementation of trade facilitation and electronic business standards. It also provides member countries of the UNECE and UNESCAP with a forum for promoting policy dialogue and knowledge-sharing.

- The development of Guides for Business Process Analysis, and for the implementation of Single Window facilities.
- The development of a Single Window Implementation Framework (SWIF) under a joint research project funded by the European Commission,
- UNNEXT is in the process of developing a draft Strategy to support Single Window Development in Central Asia

- With the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a joint UNECE-UNESCAP regional workshop was organized in Baku, Azerbaijan on business process analysis in Central Asia (June 2010).
 - A joint UNESCAP/UNECE/ADB regional Trade Facilitation Forum was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Single Window implementation in Central Asia (October 2010)
 - A joint World Customs Organisation (WCO)-UNECE workshop was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on document simplification and WCO data model (October 2010).
 - A workshop for EU member countries was organized in Amsterdam, Netherlands on high level management instruments for Single Window planning and implementation (January 2010).
 - A peer review meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on the Mongolian High Level Master Plan for the implementation of Single Window (October 2010)
4. The above-mentioned capacity-building activities have raised the awareness of policy-makers and experts regarding UNECE instruments and tools on trade facilitation and electronic business; enabled transition and developing economies to formulate more effective trade facilitation initiatives; and, strengthened national and regional capacities with the required expertise skills to implement latest trade facilitation and electronic business standards and tools.

II. Agriculture and quality standards

5. The secretariat continued to promote the implementation of international quality standards for commercial agricultural products across the UNECE region. These activities were financed from the UNDA and the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund (RVCF). Below is a brief summary of the WP.7 capacity-building activities for 2010-2011¹:

- Launched a three-year pilot project for modernizing the seed potato certification system in Russia.
- In collaboration with the Lorkh Potato Cultivation Institute in Russia, a demonstration field was set up to train inspectors from CIS countries in conducting quality of seed potatoes using UNECE standard.
- Several technical visits were undertaken by UNECE experts to advise producers of seed potatoes in various regions of Russia, and support the establishment of laboratories for testing seed potatoes for viruses and other diseases.
- A four-year technical cooperation agreement was signed between UNECE and the Swiss agricultural research station Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil (ACW) in February 2011, in order to raise the standard of cultivation, quality control and certification of seed potatoes in Russia and other CIS countries.
- Within the framework of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes' programme of activities, two technical cooperation agreements were concluded between national breeding and certification agencies for seed potatoes.

¹ Workshop reports, recommendations, training material and other information are available on the UNECE website at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcomeE.htm>, under "Promotion/Capacity-building".

The first between the Russian and French, and the second between the Russian and Scottish national agencies. These agreements will allow for the modernisation of the Russian certification system. Already in 2011, thirty new French and Scottish potato varieties will be tested in three different agro-climatic zones in Russia.

- The delivery of hands-on training using the first UNECE explanatory brochure for sweet peppers, which was published in 2010.
- International Harmonization Workshop on Commercial Quality Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables for African Countries was held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 20 to 22 April 2010.
- International Workshop on the Use of Agricultural Commercial Quality Standards in Technical Regulations and the Application of Standards in International Trade, Anapa, Russia, 4-7 October 2010.
- Regional Workshop on Seed Potatoes for Asian Countries, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, 19-21 October 2010.
- International Workshop on Commercial Quality Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables for countries of Latin America, Santiago de Chile, 31 January - 4 February 2011.

6. These activities, particularly the regional workshops, gave impetus to UNECE efforts to assist member States in developing the required legal and technical infrastructures for implementing agricultural quality standards. They also helped raise awareness about the importance of commercial agricultural quality standards in boosting production and exports, as reflected in the increased demand for UNECE capacity-building services. Technical assistance requests from member States cover a range of areas, including advanced training courses on the implementation of international agricultural quality standards and technical advice for developing the required legal and institutional set up.

III. Regulatory cooperation and standardization

7. In the winter of 2010, the UNECE organized a session on “Overcoming Barriers to Trade: Market Surveillance and Quality Infrastructure” for the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) during the annual “CEFTA Week”, held in Belgrade on 2-11 November. The session was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development of the Republic of Serbia, the Regional Quality Infrastructure project in the Western Balkans and Turkey (IPA 2009-2010), and the Secretariat to CEFTA. It was attended by relevant public and private sector agencies from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia, in addition to representatives from the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the World Bank, the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB); the Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe (PROSAFE), and UN field office Belgrade.

8. UNECE experts presented best practices in the area of market surveillance, developed by WP.6 Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS Group), and explained their relevance in addressing the challenges confronting market surveillance authorities in South East European countries.

IV. The Regional Advisor

9. Capacity building activities by the Regional Advisor involved promoting increased implementation of UN/CEFACT instruments and tools in countries with economies in transition. Below is a brief overview of the Regional Advisor's activities in 2010-2011:

A. Western CIS countries

10. With funds from the Russian voluntary contribution, the regional advisor completed three studies on the readiness of the Russian Federation for implementing a Single Window, and public-private cooperation for trade facilitation. These studies were distributed as part of the background documents for a regional conference on trade facilitation, co-organized in Moscow, Russian on 7-8 April 2011, in collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the Commission of the Customs Union between Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan.

B. Central Asia

11. As a follow up to UNECE technical assistance project for supporting trade integration in Central Asia, completed in 2009 with funds from the UNDA, the Regional Advisor conducted a follow-up mission to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The regional Advisor held talks with officials from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan on the implementation of Single Windows in their countries, and explored their capacity building needs.

12. In addition, a regional workshop on trade facilitation, the Single Window, and data harmonization was held in Kiev, Ukraine in June 2010, and a similar workshop will be held in Odessa, Ukraine in June 2011

C. South East Europe

13. Under the UNECE initiative on trade facilitation, the Single Window and data harmonization, a regional conference for Southeast European countries was organized in Durrës, Albania in September 2010. The conference highlighted the region's achievements to date in Single Window implementation, and explored the next steps, notably in data harmonization.
