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Programme of work**Biennial evaluation report for 2008-2009****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This document contains an evaluation by the Trade subprogramme of the implementation of its work programme for 2008-2009. The self-evaluation follows the evaluation plan (documents ECE/Trade/C/2007/14; ECE/Trade/2007/14/Corr.1) endorsed by the Committee at its second session of 2007.

The document is prepared pursuant to the decision of the Commission (document E/2004/37-E/ECE/1416), requesting sectoral committees to conduct biennial self-evaluations of their work programmes. The Committee is invited to endorse the evaluation report.

I. Cluster of activities 1: Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (implemented by UN/CEFACT)

Expected accomplishment 1(a):

1. Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business.

Indicators of achievement:

(a) Number of new and/or revised UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business agreed upon by member States

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 11 recommendations, etc. agreed upon by member States

Target 2008-2009: 12 recommendations, etc. agreed upon by member States

(Achieved: 24)

(b) Number of countries (regions), international organizations and sectors involved in the development of UN/CEFACT standards

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 36 actors involved

Target 2008-2009: 40 actors involved

(Achieved: 40)

Accomplishment account

2. Development work for trade facilitation and electronic business is done in five Groups under UN/CEFACT (the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business) that meet together twice a year at forums (large expert group meetings) in different regions of the world with up to 250 participants per Forum. Individual meetings of the groups and their project teams are held between the forums. The outcomes of the work, as well as plans for future work, are presented to annual UN/CEFACT plenary sessions for approval. The expected accomplishment for the 2008-2009 biennium was the adoption by member States of new/revised recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for trade facilitation, electronic business.

3. A review of results achieved for this indicator in 2008-2009 shows 24 (12 in 2008 and 12 in 2009) new and/or updated UNECE recommendations on trade facilitation and e-business were agreed upon by member States, and that the target was met for the biennium 2008-2009.

4. In 2008-2009, the UN/CEFACT Forum held four sessions, in Mexico, Senegal, Italy and Japan. The numbers of participants in each Forum session steadily increased, albeit with some decrease during the Senegal Forum in 2008. Participants continued to come from a wide number of countries, although Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region were relatively more represented than Latin America or Africa. A wide range of stakeholders continued to be involved, ranging from universities to companies in different sectors such as telecoms or banks and from Government representatives to officials of the United Nations and other international organizations. The 2007 baseline had indicated that

36 different stakeholders had been represented during each Forum, while the 2008-2009 target was for 40 stakeholders (delegations from 33 countries and 7 international organizations and other institutions, totaling of 306 participants during the 2008 Forums and 378 participants during the 2009 Forums) to be involved in the development of UN/CEFACT standards during each meeting – a target which was met. This overall increase, despite the relatively lower attendance in Senegal, is a very positive trend.

Lessons learned

5. The situation in trade facilitation and electronic business standards could further improve if member States and other stakeholders collaborate more closely and actively in UN/CEFACT's work with a view to bridging critical gaps. Much will depend upon the precise nature and effect of the action taken by UN/CEFACT to facilitate wider involvement (including the participation of transition economies) in the development and implementation of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations, in line with the requirements laid down by EXCOM¹.

6. A priority of UN/CEFACT is to enhance the involvement of experts from countries with economies in transition, as directed by EXCOM. An analysis of the numbers of stakeholders and experts who came to the UN/CEFACT Forum sessions over the biennium shows this goal is being reached. Ever though stakeholders from countries with economies in transition continue to constitute only a minority of the participants, their numbers are gradually rising. Nevertheless, the attendance figures show that it remains necessary to give priority to enhancing the involvement of a wider range of actors, especially from economies in transition – and, hence, to further disseminate UN/CEFACT's output and have its recommendations and standards used by a wider array of stakeholders. Work is therefore proceeding on promotion/ awareness raising, outreach and capacity-building.

Expected Accomplishment 1(b):

7. Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms and standards for trade facilitation

Indicators of achievement:

(a) Number of downloads of key recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools from the UNECE Internet site, as a proxy for their use.

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 128,000 downloads

Target 2008-2009: 128,000 downloads

(Achieved: 119,000)

(b) Number of requests for assistance received from countries and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE trade facilitation and e-business instruments and responses

¹ UNECE, Recommendations concerning the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, ECE/EX/4.

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 10 requests for assistance

Target 2008-2009: 11 requests for assistance

(Achieved: 11)

Accomplishment account

8. The methodology to measure “the number of downloads of key recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools from the ECE Internet site, as a proxy for their use” has been adapted to be more representative of UN/CEFACT activities. Whereas previously the indicator was limited to the number of downloads of only two key e-business recommendations, it was enlarged to encompass the most important newer trade facilitation standards. The indicator is the sum of the number of downloads of the following recommendations and standards:

- United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE)
- UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Trade (UN/EDIFACT)
- Core Component Library (CCL)
- Recommendation 33 (Single Window).

9. The baseline and target were wrongly set for this indicator, as “the number of downloads of key recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools from the ECE Internet site, as a proxy for their use” in 2006-2007 was 94,000 (37,000 in 2006 and 57,000 in 2007) not 128,000. This means the number of downloads of UN/LOCODE and UN/EDIFACT has slightly increased compared to the previous biennium (from 94,000 for the 2006-2007 biennium to 101,000 in this biennium (49,000 in 2008 and 52,000 in 2009). On the other hand, downloads for the new CCL (Core Component Library) and Recommendation 33 (Single Window) have gone from zero up to 9,200 (5,200 in 2008, 4,000 in 2009).

10. The number of requests received from member States and other international organizations to assist in the promotion and implementation of ECE trade-related instruments was counted by the secretary and the Regional Advisor: UN/CEFACT has received a total of 11 requests (5 in 2008 and 6 in 2009), thus attaining its target.

Lessons learned

11. The number of downloads are greatly affected by the rhythm of production of new standards, the extent to which some standards are replacements or improvements of other standards and changes which are needed in the indicators to reflect new products and developments. For example, the publication of a new DAPLOS UN/EDIFACT (Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport) message in 2007 meant many UN/EDIFACT user groups had to update their databases, resulting in a higher than usual number of downloads – which led to setting high targets for the following years when new messages were not issued (due to UN/EDIFACT being a relatively mature and stable standard). However, while fewer downloads of mature standards may indicate fewer new implementations, they do not necessarily indicate fewer overall implementations. A new UN/EDIFACT message GOVCBR was published in October 2009 as part of the UN/EDIFACT release 09A and, consequently, a significant increase in numbers of downloads can be expected between November 2009 and March 2010 – but these results cannot yet be reflected in this report. Concerning the numbers of downloads for the new

CCL and Recommendation 33, there appears to be a slight downward trend in 2009, but it remains to be seen if this is confirmed next biennium

12. The number of requests for assistance is expected to increase in the new biennium, given that the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM)² has requested that UN/CEFACT make efforts to facilitate greater involvement by governments, and particularly transition economies, in developing and implementing UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations. In response, and in collaboration with the secretariat, UN/CEFACT has developed an integrated strategic capacity-building plan on the use and implementation of UN/CEFACT instruments with particular attention to the needs of transition economies.³ Much will depend on how the capacity building plan⁴ is implemented, as well as on the rhythm at which key envisaged standards, recommendations and tools are developed and the availability of resources.

II. Cluster of activities 2: Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (implemented by WP.6)

Expected accomplishment 2(a):

13. Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation.

Indicators of achievement:

(a) Number of new and/or revised UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation agreed upon by member States

Performance measures :

Baseline 2007 : 1 recommendation, etc.

Target 2008-2009 : 1 recommendation, etc.

(Achieved: 1)

Accomplishment account

14. The work done by the Working Party is developed by experts of the ad hoc team of specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START Team) and of the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS Group). Project team meetings are held during the year and all experts gather at the annual session to present the progress made in the different initiatives and plans for future work. For the 2008-2009 biennium, member States agreed on 1 revised recommendation (1 in 2008 and 0 in 2009), and met the target of 1 new and/or revised recommendation.

² UNECE, Recommendations concerning the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, ECE/EX/4.

³ See UNECE, Progress Report on decisions by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/TRADE/C//CEFACT/2009/3); UN/CEFACT Strategic Action Plan to Enhance Participation by Countries in Transition (ECE/TRADE/C//CEFACT/2009/4); and UN/CEFACT Integrated Strategic Capacity-Building Plan with Specific Focus (ECE/TRADE/C//CEFACT/2009/5).

⁴ See on this UNECE, Meeting of the Executive Committee, 13 July 2009, Chairman's conclusions.

Lessons learned

15. As recommendations only represent one aspect of the work carried out in the area of regulatory cooperation, future measures for this indicator could include the number of new and/or revised tools or the number of new/or revised common regulatory objectives (CROs) developed by sectoral initiatives.

Expected accomplishment 2(b):

16. Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation

Indicators of achievement:

(b) Number of requests for assistance received from member States and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE regulatory cooperation and standardization policy instruments.

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 4 requests

Target 2008-2009: 4 requests

(Achieved: 5)

Accomplishment account

17. The number of requests received from member States and other international organizations to assist in the promotion and implementation of ECE trade-related instruments was 5. WP.6 met its target of 4 requests (1 in 2008 and 4 in 2009).

Lessons learned

18. From the requests for assistance received, it appears there is a demand that cannot be met due to lack of funds for capacity-building in this area. For example, there was a demand from Belarus and another from Serbia for assistance to regional groupings working on regulatory cooperation. Both projects, which proposed several steps to strengthen coordination among regulatory authorities and conformity-assessment bodies in the CIS region and in the Balkans in order to avoid multiple testing and unnecessary costs, could not be implemented due to lack of funds.

III. Cluster of activities 3: Agricultural Quality Standards (implemented by WP.7).

Expected accomplishment 3(a):

19. Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for agricultural produce

Indicators of achievement:

(a) Number of new or revised international standards, recommendations and implementation guidelines agreed upon by member States

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 18 standards, etc.

Target 2008-2009: 25 standards, etc.

(Achieved: 39)

Accomplishment account

20. The work done by the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its four specialized sections contributes directly to the Trade subprogramme's overall trade facilitation objectives by setting internationally harmonized commercial quality standards for agricultural produce. Most of the trade in agricultural produce within and with the European Union is done using UNECE standards. During the 2008-2009 biennium, the Working Party adopted 39 new or revised standards (13 new and revised 7 standards in 2008; 4 new and 15 revised standards in 2009). Results for this indicator largely exceeded the target of 25, in spite of an increased level of complexity in the standards being developed.

Lessons learned

21. The increased level of output can be attributed to improved organization of the work. It is also due to the strong demand by member States to develop new agricultural standards for products where there are no recognized standards yet, which was not anticipated when the biennium targets were set. Increased output was possible in part due to the addition of one staff member, who was able to dedicate part of his time to this work. The indicator is an approximate measure of the level of activity of the intergovernmental bodies and the interest that countries and non-governmental organizations take in this work area. It is not precise as a measure of the impact because standards differ in their complexity and in their importance in trade. For example, updating one standard on meat can be as much work as updating several standards for fresh fruit and vegetables and completely new standards generally entail more work than revisions of existing standards.

22. The overall level of standards development and maintenance will probably remain stable as this is the maximum amount of work that can be supported by the present resources. It would be difficult to do more without either sacrificing the quality of the work or decreasing work on promoting implementation of the standards.

Expected accomplishment 3(b):

23. Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for agricultural produce

Indicators of achievement:

- (a) Degree of application of UNECE standards to be measured through a survey

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 950 standards

Target 2008-2009: 972 standards

(Achieved: N/A)The survey postponed

- (b) Number of requests for assistance received from member States and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE agricultural quality standards instruments

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 3 requests

Target 2008-2009: 5 requests

(Achieved: 15)

(c) Number of participants trained through capacity-building activities (workshops and training courses) on the implementation of the agricultural standards

Performance measures:

Baseline 2007: 100 participants

Target 2008-2009: 150 participants

(Achieved: 550)

Accomplishment account

24. The expected accomplishment has been achieved. The survey has been postponed because of the changes in the EU legislation on commercial marketing standards. The new EU regulation reduced the number of mandatory standards from 36 to 10, and introduced a general marketing standard, which allows the use of UNECE standards. The figure of 972 was obtained as a product of the number of standards obligatory in EU (36) and the number of EU countries (27). Since many non-EU countries use UNECE standards, the actual number of applications of UNECE standards is higher.

25. The number of requests received from member States and other international organizations to assist in the promotion and implementation of ECE trade-related instruments was 15 requests; 5 had been expected (4 in 2008 and 11 in 2009).

26. Drawing on the United Nations Development Account and the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund, the secretariat organized 9 workshops/seminars/training courses (3 in 2008 and 6 in 2009): 110 and 440 persons were trained in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

Lessons learned

27. It is difficult to arrive at an exact estimate of the application of the UNECE standards, because although they are used worldwide, in many countries they are not obligatory. The indicator should perhaps be limited to the measurable number of legally binding standards. However, this number would considerably underestimate the actual use of UNECE standards that are used daily by producers and traders in thousands of commercial contracts.

28. The campaign to promote UNECE agricultural quality standards worldwide, which started in 2008, appears to have been very successful, resulting in increased interest in the practical application of the standards. Their use has also been positively affected by changes in European Union regulations, which expand the number of products where EU regulatory requirements on the quality of fresh fruit and vegetables can be met by using UNECE standards. The secretariat and the Working Party will continue their promotional activities.