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Capacity-building activities

Report of capacity-building activities

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides an overview of capacity-building activities carried out under the UNECE subprogramme on Trade during the period 2014-2014. It includes activities carried out by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and by the Regional Adviser; the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6); and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).

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



I. Introduction

1. This paper presents the work undertaken by the UNECE secretariat over the period 2012-2014 to implement the recommendations of the Executive Committee (EXCOM). The EXCOM recommended the secretariat to deliver enhanced capacity-building for member States drawing on the work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), and to encourage the implementation of the Centre's recommendations, norms and guideline tools
2. In Decision A(65) Outcome of the review of the 2005 Reform of ECE (paras 18), member States decided that:
3. "The subprogramme should continue implementing its standard-setting mandates and strengthen its standard-setting activities in Working Parties 6 and 7 under the overall guidance of the Committee, and in UN/CEFACT under the overall guidance of the EXCOM. At the end of 2014 EXCOM may decide, after evaluation, whether it is desirable for UN/CEFACT to report to the Committee on Trade. Capacity building and technical assistance activities to help countries in the region to implement standards developed under the subprogramme may be decided by EXCOM, if they are financed from extrabudgetary resources, demand-driven, results-oriented, time limited and closely coordinated with other international actors, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Trade Centre (ITC)."

2. Major developments in capacity-building initiatives in UN/CEFACT

4. It its fifty-eighth meeting, on 4 February 2013 EXCOM approved the "Draft outcome of the review of the 2005 ECE Reform", subsequently approved by the sixty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Europe on 10 April 2013, as document E/ECE/1468. The new trade subprogramme capacity-building strategy, is resumed in the following two paragraphs:
 - (a) "capacity building and technical assistance activities to help countries in the Region to implement standards developed under the subprogramme, may be decided by EXCOM, if they are financed from extra-budgetary resources, demand-driven, results-oriented, time limited and closely coordinated with other international actors, such as the WTO, UNCTAD and the ITC" (E/ECE/1468 para. 18 (a))
 - (b) "identified three posts presently allocated to the Global Trade Solutions Section of the Trade Division (i.e. the Section supporting UN/CEFACT), and used for capacity building activities (two P4 posts and one P2 post), and agreed that two of these could, after completion of their present activities and at the latest by January 2014, be transferred" to other programmes/activities (E/ECE/1468 para. 31 (b)).
5. The elimination of all three Posts dedicated to technical assistance and capacity building in the GTS Section will have a significant negative impact on the use of UN/CEFACT instruments, especially in developing and transition economies
6. The reallocation of UN/CEFACT secretariat resources will result in:
 - (a) Reduced capacity of the secretariat to respond to requests from member States for assistance in awareness-raising and implementation of trade-facilitation and electronic-business instruments. This will include:

- Reduced number of seminars on trade facilitation in areas such as document alignment, data harmonization, business process analysis, Single Window implementation, and trade facilitation analysis and planning
- Reduced participation in United Nations Development Account projects to support transition and developing countries in facilitating trade
- Reduced participation in the joint UNECE/UNESCAP programme to develop the United Nations Network of Experts in Trade Facilitation (UNNExT) – including the preparation of trade-facilitation user guides and support material

(b) Reduced UNECE support for the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT;

(c) Less support for maintenance and further development of the *Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide*.

7. Follows an overview of the capacity building activities that the secretariat has carried out from June 2012 to October 2013, including the two extra-budgetary capacity building projects approved by the EXCOM: the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) and the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy.

8. UNECE continued its outreach work to train policy makers, negotiators and implementers on the use of its Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG). Throughout 2013, training workshops were held in the following locations:

- Europe – Turin Italy, 12 to 14 Feb 2013
- East Africa – Kigali Rwanda, 1 to 3 May 2013
- Middle East – Aqaba Jordan, 13 to 15 May 2013
- Central Asia – Bishkek Kyrgyzstan, 10 to 13 June 2013
- Commonwealth Secretariat – WTO Geneva, 16 Sept 2013
- Latin America – Santiago Chile, 23 to 25 Sept 2013
- West Africa – Dakar Senegal, 8 to 10 Oct 2013
- South East Asia – Bangkok Thailand, 20 to 22 Nov 2013

9. TFIG is a publicly available web-based interactive information tool on the various recommendations, standards, guides and other related resources available from all key international organizations (UNECE, UNCTAD, WCO, World Bank, OECD, ICC, etc.) in the trade facilitation area. The Guide also provides links to the available instruments from all key organizations that support implementation of the trade facilitation measures under discussion at the World Trade Organization – see http://tfig.unece.org/pdf_files/wto-map/map.html.

10. TFIG was developed by UNECE with contributions from its UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), and financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA. TFIG can be accessed directly online at: tfig.unece.org.

11. Following a request from the European Commission Task Force on Greece (TFGR), UNECE experts assisted the Greek Government in the design and development of a comprehensive strategy and road map for trade facilitation.

12. The road map (www.mindev.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Greece_Trade_Facilitation_Strategy_Roadmap_Oct-2012.pdf) contains a series of actions designed to identify and overcome regulatory and procedural bottlenecks and obstacles to Greek

exports. It is estimated that the proposed measures could reduce time to export by 50% and costs by 20% by the end of 2015, thus leading to a 10% increase in export value and 80,000 new jobs.

13. At the request of the TFGR, UNECE will continue to support the Greek government in the implementation of the road map through to 2015. UNECE experts assisted Greek authorities in a pilot project to analyse and simplify export process for specific agricultural products. Similar analyses in other sectors and other related projects are planned for 2014. Overall responsibility for implementation the Trade Facilitation Strategy lies with the Greek authorities and a high level steering group has been created to oversee and manage the reform process.

14. Since autumn 2011, the UNECE secretariat has been implementing UNDA 7 tranche project on “strengthening the capacity of developing and transition economies to link to global supply chains through the reduction of trade obstacles” (the CB activities under this project are highlighted below). As a part of the project the representatives of all five UN regional commissions stressed the importance of coordinated work, use of common tools and agreed on the “joint UNRCs approach to trade facilitation”. Under this initiative a joint web page was elaborated which currently contains all outputs of RCs in this area (to see: <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/capacity-building-for-trade-facilitation/joint-unrcs-approach-to-trade-facilitation.html>).

15. In the framework of the UNDA project the following events were held: international trade facilitation conference “transforming global trade: single window and supply chains in the next decade” (Geneva, 12-13 December 2011), five regional capacity-building workshops in various regions: Middle East (Jordan, May 2013), South East Asia (Thailand, July 2013), UNECE region (Kyrgyzstan, July 2013 and Belarus, October 2013), Latin America (Chile, September 2013). These workshops allowed to bring awareness of UNECE- UNCEFACT tools and instruments on trade facilitation and e-business and to train public officials in their use. The concluding (for the project) trade facilitation forum was organized in Bangkok on 18-19 November 2013.

16. Under the project two global studies (on information requirements for supply chains and on interoperability of single window mechanisms) and four regional studies on specific region-related issues were prepared (they are available on the above-mentioned “joint UNRCs approach to TF” website).

17. In conducting its on-going capacity building activities UNECE secretariat is focusing primarily on the identification of needs of countries, on supporting developments contributing to efficient and secure international trade, on providing opportunities for sharing experiences and lessons learned, on involving countries in transition into UNECE work.

18. Following previous contacts with a regional CIS organization of ministries of communications (“Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications”; RCC), in 2012, RCC nominated its experts to work with UN/CEFACT. The involvement of these experts resulted in an elaboration in 2013 of a project proposal of a new recommendation “on ensuring legally significant trusted transboundary electronic interaction” which is currently being discussed at the UN/CEFACT Bureau.

19. In the area of electronic documents and single window, the secretariat continue collaborating with the Customs Union (CU) of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan and experts from the CU secretariat (EurAsian Economic Commission) took part for the first time in the UN/CEFACT Forum in April 2013 in Geneva with questions relating to UN/CEFACT standards and to guidelines/explanations on their possible use. It is expected that such contacts will continue; this feedback also showed the need for more explanatory and user-

friendly information on the practical implementation of the existing and future UNECE standards.

20. In the regional context, UNECE received a request (May 2011) from the CIS Interstate Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification (uniting standardization bodies of 11 CIS states) for an assistance in preparing potential regional standardization programme on information standards (based on UN/CEFACT standards). The UNECE is also collaborating with APEC Electronic Commerce Steering Group on interoperability issues.

21. In the area of information awareness the UNECE secretariat continued its work on a national and regional/sub-regional level.

22. The following awareness events were held in 2012-2013. In the field of promoting information standards, UNECE has been cooperating with the Russian standards-setting technical committee in organizing a conference on information standards "INFOSTANDARD". The first conference was held in 2010 and since then it became an annual event (last time, 22-23 October 2013, Moscow). It provides a forum in Russia and CIS region for a debate on a wide range of issues (in 2012, special panel session was held on single window, in 2013 – on supply chains).

23. The UNECE contributed to organization of logistics conferences in Russia (in February 2012 and in October 2013); an organization of a new conference in spring 2014 is under discussion.

24. The UNECE is working closely with the Association of European Businesses in Russia (AEB) and is contributing to conferences on customs issues regularly organized by AEB (latest conferences held in Moscow in February 2012 and in February 2013) and to preparation of relevant position and information papers.

25. An important issue for a number of CIS countries recently acceded to WTO is how to implement their new commitments. The UNECE contributed to an organization and participated in the conference on WTO and its implications for Russian business held in Moscow in October 2012. The conference allowed to document the specific concerns of companies and took them into account while planning future capacity building and awareness events in the CIS region.

26. In 2012, the UNECE secretariat servicing two UNECE sub-programmes (on regulatory cooperation and standardization policies and on trade facilitation and e-business) initiated a new cross-sectoral UNECE activity on promoting standards through including them into educational curricula of national educational programmes of universities and of vocational training for public officials. This issue was discussed during the international workshop on education on standardization held in November 2012 in the framework of the annual session of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6). The proposal was supported by all major players: governments, standards-setting bodies and academia and to this end a model educational programme was elaborated. This programme was used in 2013 by a number of educational establishments which offered new courses (on standards, including information standards) to their students. In the area of education UNECE is closely working with major international standardization organizations (ISO, IEC, ITU) and, for example, ITU is considering using UNECE model programme for awareness building on its standards.

27. Using information as a CB tool, UNECE is trying to expand an access to and to improve its information resources (see above on a joint UNRCs site). Many governments note the usefulness, for example, of such tools as Single Window Repository (national experiences in implementation of this mechanism). Two new studies were added to it in

2012 and it currently contains twenty studies on SW and five country papers on the use of electronic documents. The study on SW in Columbia is currently being prepared.

28. Another UNECE Repository (on multi-agency working groups on trade facilitation) contains six relevant studies.

29. In 2012, in cooperation with the Russian business association “Business Russia” (“Delovya Rossia”) and with contributions from international experts a repository of customs-related obstacles to trade was prepared. It refers to typical problems faced by Russian companies in customs area and provides examples on how similar problems are addressed and solved in other countries (for example, in EU). This paper was used as a background paper for discussions on a reform of customs in Russia held at the Russian Parliament in April 2013.

Capacity-building activities (June 2012–October 2013)

<i>UNNExT Capacity building Workshop for Tajikistan on planning and managing the national Data Harmonization project for Tajikistan Single Window</i>	<i>Dushanbe, Tajikistan</i>	<i>June 2012</i>
Workshop on planning and managing National Data Harmonization in support of the Tajikistan Single Window Dushanbe	Tajikistan	June 2012
Support of the EU Task Force for Greece and the Greek Government in developing a Trade Facilitation Strategy	Athens, Greece	June 2012
National High Level Workshop for an integrated Export Facilitation Strategy In Greece	Athens, Greece	July 2012
5 th Training on UNECE/UNCEFACT programme at the OSCE Border Management College	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	12 – 13 July 2012
Government and private sector stakeholder workshop to facilitate export of Greek Agriculture produce	Athens, Greece	October 2012
6 th Training on UNECE/UNCEFACT programme at the OSCE Border Management College	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	15-16 October 2012
Awareness information sessions on UN/CEFACT tools and UNECE activities	Geneva	November 2012
UNECE Workshop on Business Process Analysis (BPA) for implementation of the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy	Athens, Greece	26-27 November 2012
Workshop of the WTO negotiating group on Trade Facilitation focused on SW and customs risk management systems, funded by the Government of Korea	Seoul, South Korea	November 2012
Breakout regional sessions of the Central Asian Countries- Asia Trade Facilitation Fora	Colombo, Sri Lanka	November 2012
Awareness information sessions on UN/CEFACT tools and UNECE activities for transition economies	Geneva, Switzerland	January 2013

<i>UNNExT Capacity building Workshop for Tajikistan on planning and managing the national Data Harmonization project for Tajikistan Single Window</i>	<i>Dushanbe, Tajikistan</i>	<i>June 2012</i>
Workshop with the Task Force for Greece on Trade Facilitation implementation in Greece	Brussels	November 2013
Workshop with the European Port Community Systems Association on Paperless trading systems	Brussels	July 2013
Workshop on Agriculture Supply Chain Facilitation	Beijing, China	September 2013
Asia Pacific Workshop for designing and implementing Trade Facilitation	Beijing, China	September 2013

II. Capacity-building activities of the Regional Adviser

30. In 2012 and 2013, the UNECE Regional Adviser (Trade) has undertaken 29 missions, 13 of which involved capacity-building events, 9 of which organized by the Regional Adviser. He also oversaw the completion of four studies and one publication, the results of which are taken into account in the development of important projects in the region, as well as the UNECE secretariat, the Committee on Trade and the UN/CEFACT bureau, as they develop their future work.

31. The events organized by the Regional Adviser included:

First phase of Single Window in Uzbekistan launched:

(a) A seminar in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on the Single Window, coorganized with UNCTAD and UNDP, finalized the results of a set of capacity-building activities in 2008-2009. Results included drafting a brochure and launch of the first phase of a Single Window in Uzbekistan on 1 April 2012 (included in the World Bank repository of Single Windows).

Trade Facilitation in Ukraine: a Port Community System (local Single Window) first phase implemented and functioning; and an Interagency Working Group in support of the SW project and trade facilitation in Ukraine established. The new Customs Code of Ukraine (in force from 1 June 2012) stipulated in art.319 that documentary control should be organized on the Single Window principle – a direct result from the capacity-building activities of the Regional Adviser, as stated by Ukrainian Customs:

(b) The second Odessa seminar entitled “A local Single Window (port community system) for the ports of the Odessa region in the perspective of the European integration of Ukraine”, was organized in Odessa, on 30 May 2012, together with the Ukrainian Government and Plaske JSC, with support from the UNECE-Czech project. Results: (1) New texts in Ukrainian legislation identified for amendment (proposals made during the seminar) Mr Muromtsev from Ukrainian Southern Customs stressed the key input of UNECE’s capacity-building; (2) the Port of Odessa and Plaske JSC established a joint (public-private) enterprise (PPL 33-35), to work on building a port community system, and this company became a member of the European Port Community Systems Association (EPCSA), which also participated at the seminar; (3) The seminar took stock of organizational and technical development achievements during the last year and made concrete recommendations for the next year; next steps of cooperation between UNECE and the Ukrainian partners agreed, and later implemented; (4) a meeting of the Ukrainian

Interagency Working Group in support of trade facilitation and the Single Window took place within the programme of the seminar.

(c) The third Odessa seminar entitled “Trade Facilitation in Ukraine and the Local Single Window Project in Odessa: Achievements and New Challenges”, was organized together with the Ukrainian Government and Plaske JSC, with small support from the UNECE EAA project, on 30 May 2013, in Odessa, combined with the tenth meeting of the Interagency Working Group established to support of this project, back-to-back with the BSEC Transport Ministers Meeting and a Freight Forwarder Conference. The seminar brought together the major stakeholders in the local Single Window project: regulatory agencies, business (including freight forwarders and shipping agencies), the ports of Odessa and Ilichevsk, representatives of seven neighbouring countries, international experts, and others. They discussed the latest developments, the level of commitment of each agency, problems and possible solutions, related to e-signature legislation and certification, and the exchange of information in UNEDIFACT and XML. They formulated recommendations to position the Single Window and other projects in a longer term trade facilitation strategy, which may become one of the next deliverables under the project. The seminar further advanced the project establishing a Port Community System in the ports of Odessa region, and set the stage to expand the implementation of the first electronic document in the port (e-naryad) to several regulatory bodies and private sector stakeholders and to two other ports, as well as the automation of other documents.

The UNECE Regional Adviser in Trade continued to lead the initiative on trade facilitation, the Single Window and data harmonization in the Caucasus in 2012-2013, building cooperation among the three Caucasus countries and their neighbours in this area. Significant success was achieved in the region since the first conference in 2009, notably in building a data exchange agency, which is leading the establishment of a Single Window in Georgia. A national Single Window was launched in Azerbaijan. Agreements were achieved at the two conferences to work on an electronic corridor from Ukraine to Georgia and further via the Caucasus.

(d) The Second Regional South Caucasus Conference on trade facilitation, the Single Window and trade data harmonization, was organized on 13-14 June 2012 in Tbilisi, in collaboration with the Government of Georgia and USAID. Participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine took part in it. This was a follow-up event to the first Conference held on 23-24 June 2009 in Tbilisi, in order to promote the international standards for trade facilitation and data harmonization; develop national Single Window projects and a regional initiative on data harmonization. The conference produced the following results: (1) cooperation of the three countries of the South Caucasus, Turkey and Ukraine, (2) reports on progress made since the first Conference in June 2009, (3) a set of recommendations on the next steps, (4) analysis of key issues and problems in trade facilitation (it served as the basis of a USAID study on this subject), (5) agreement of Armenia and Georgia, and Azerbaijan and Georgia to develop agreements on Customs transit data exchange (on the basis of a proposal by UNECE and UNCTAD), (6) informal agreements between public and private representatives of Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey on concrete steps towards expanding trade corridors through the Caucasus; (7) agreement by Armenian specialists on the WCO Data Model to assist the other countries in data mapping to the WCO DM.

(e) the third regional conference on trade facilitation in the South Caucasus, Batumi, 24-25 June 2013, was organized together with the Ministry of the Economy and Revenue Service of Georgia, USAID Georgia (Economic Prosperity Initiative) and the International Railway Transport Committee. The conference contributed to the development of the Caucasus transport corridor and the Single Window projects in the region. Together with

the business community, the organizing agencies identified problems and opportunities for further development, notably in building synergies among various projects to be reoriented towards establishing a Single Window and port community systems in Georgia, cross-border exchange of information, the inclusion of the countries in the development of a single Eurasian railway regime and documentation, deepening supply chain analysis.

UNECE continued to support the implementation of trade facilitation measures and the Single Window in the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Commission. Several studies on the readiness of these countries were developed. A vision of implementing the Single Window was developed, as a result of these capacity-building activities. The studies were used in the feasibility study and the data model development of the Integrated Information System for Mutual and Foreign Trade of the Customs Union (IISVVT).

(f) The Second UNECE-Eurasian Economic Commission Conference on Trade Facilitation and the Single Window took place in Moscow, 23-24 April 2013. This was one of the three deliverables of the Russian contribution project (E159) for 2013. The conference provided up-to-date information on the implementation of international standards for data exchange and the Single Window. A discussion on the problematic issues hampering the implementation of trade facilitation measures and the Single Window concept in particular served as a basis for drafting recommendations for action by the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), its Member States, and UNECE, and decided on the next steps for the E159 project in 2013 (notably, develop a Master Plan template), and to organize jointly with EEC the third Conference on Trade Facilitation.

(g) A seminar on developing Master Plans for Single Window projects will be held in November 2013, in Moscow.

The Regional Adviser continues to provide support for the SPECA countries

(h) two capacity-building events took place back-to-back with the 8th meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade in Dushanbe, 7-9 October 2013: a brainstorming on the Single Window project in Tajikistan, which brought together all major stakeholders and international development partners, took stock of the recent developments, when GIZ and the European Union have supported a project on the Single Window initiated by UNECE. The first stage, supported by the EU would be launched in 2013, and the next stage of the Single Window and Customs modernization programme will be supported by ADB. The brainstorming identified several sensitive areas, on which the local stakeholders and the supporting organizations may concentrate.

32. In addition, the Regional Adviser provided training at capacity-building events in Belgrade organized by UNCTAD on trade development, at a forum on housing organized by FIAPSI in St Petersburg, on the new Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide in Bishkek for transition economies, etc.

III. Regulatory cooperation and standardization policy

33. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP. 6) held and co-organized several awareness-raising and capacity-building events since the 5th session of the Committee.

34. UNECE continued to work closely with the Task Force on Technical Regulations under the EU – Russia Industrialists' Round Table, a business platform for company leaders from the European Union and the Russian Federation, which has made recommendations on regulatory convergence between the EU and the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Working in close collaboration with the IEC Scheme for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive

Atmospheres (IECEX Scheme), the Working Party organized a workshop for regulatory authorities of Latin American countries and the BRICs countries on best regulatory practice for equipment used in environments with an explosive atmosphere. The objective of the capacity-building was to increase the safety of industries in which explosions may occur and to facilitate trade in related products and equipment.

35. In the run-up to the workshop, the UNECE and IECEX secretariats prepared a translation of the UNECE Common Regulatory Objectives into Arabic, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

36. The Trade subprogramme also contributed to a regional training course organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for authorities from Central Asia in the use of standards and conformity assessment options in regulatory practice. A similar workshop will be organized by UNIDO in 2014, again with a contribution by the Working Party.

37. As part of the twenty second session of the Working Party, a capacity-building workshop on "Introducing standards-related issues in educational curricula" was organized. In 2013, as part of the twenty third session, capacity-building was addressed through an International Conference on "Standards and Regulations.

IV. Agricultural quality standards

38. The secretariat continued to promote the implementation of international quality standards for commercial agricultural products and to set legal and technical infrastructure for their practical application across the UNECE region and in other regions of the world.

39. In May 2012, the secretariat organized a workshop in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina on UNECE and EU fresh fruit and vegetables standards with theoretical and practical training for both the public and private sector. The workshop was organized jointly with UNDP and USAID and focused on the legal and practical requirements for standards' implementation, use and inspection.

40. In June 2013, WP 7's Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce organized an exhibition on the application and reach of UNECE standards in international trade. The event was accompanied by a series of lectures around the theme.

41. In Commonwealth of Independent States, the activities were financed from the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund (RVCF). Since the 2012 session of the Committee, experts of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and the secretariat carried out the following capacity-building activities:

- Theoretical and practical training course on biotechnological methods for in-vitro seed potato production, Vladikavkaz, Russian Federation (September 2012)
- Regional Workshop on Modern Systems for High-Quality Seed Potato Production, Vladikavkaz, Russian Federation (July 2013)
- Ten technical advisory missions and hands-on trainings in the field (production of seed potatoes, field inspection, sampling for pathogen tests, storage, production of microplants and microtubers, planting and production of minitubers in protected environment, etc.), Vladikavkaz and Moscow, Russian Federation (July 2012 – July 2013); Switzerland (October 2013).

42. A regional Northern Caucasus Seed Potato Production Centre was put into operation in 2013. The centre comprises a biotechnological and diagnostics laboratory and has the capacity for a large-scale production of in-vitro micro plants and micro tubers, mini tubers

in protected environment, and first field generations at high altitude under clean phytosanitary conditions. In addition to the core funding, the project benefited from significant financial contributions from the private sector. Another biotechnological laboratory will be created in 2014 at the A.G. Lorkh Institute for Potato Cultivation. The premises for the future laboratory had been prepared and the equipment had been ordered.

43. In the medium term, the seed potato project, which the secretariat had been carrying out together with UNECE experts from the Swiss Federal Research Station Agroscope ACW, will directly contribute to improving food security for 280 million people living in CIS countries. The transfer and introduction into practice of the new biotechnologies have the potential of doubling average yields and considerably increase farmers' productivity and income. Consumers will benefit from better-quality and more varied produce at lower prices.

44. The demand for further capacity-building was high. The workshops and training sessions gave rise to expectations by beneficiaries for short- and longer-term follow-up and many beneficiaries hope UNECE would be able to provide further technical assistance. However, future activities can only be ensured through further fundraising and partnership with other international organizations, national administrations and the private sector.
