UNECE translating global goals into norms, standards and conventions

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Secretary, Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies
Large and diverse membership (56 members)
1.2 billion people (20% of world population)
GDP $18.7 trillion USD ($16,085 per capita)
Surface area of 47 million km2 (35% of land above water)
UNECE: Early days

• Created by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1947
• 18 Charter Member Countries
• Original mission: To assist in the reconstruction and economic development of post-war Europe
• During cold war, UNECE bridged the two sides of the Iron Curtain
• After cold war: integration of the Central and Eastern European countries into the world economy (transition from centrally planned to market economies, institution building, technical assistance)
UNECE: Today

• UNECE helps implement the Sustainable Development Goals by translating global goals into standards, regulations, conventions, building capacity and engaging in partnerships with the private sector, the academia, and civil society.

• “UNECE’s achievements have made it a go-to source for improving global public goods and services, with more than 100 countries beyond the UNECE region benefiting from its work” (UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon).
Highlights of the case study

- 221 staff
- Regular budget $26.9 million
- Large number and diversity of sectors encompassing: Trade, Environment, Transport, Sustainable Energy, Forestry, Housing and Land Management, Statistics, etc.
- Large variety of instruments developed (conventions, regulations, standards, recommendations, charters, action plans…)
- Number & diversity of actors that participate in IRC
IRC processes @ UNECE

- Exchange of information
- Data collection and statistical work
- Policy analysis
- Classifications
- Legal instruments (conventions, regulations, protocols)
- Non binding instruments
- Dispute resolution
IRC @UNECE: a success story

Table 2. Examples of positive global outcomes resulting from UNECE conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNECE Convention</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Positive outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement concerning the adoption of uniform technical prescription for wheeled vehicles equipment and parts</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Enhanced safety for car occupants and pedestrians</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIR Convention</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>More efficient cross-border trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aarhus Convention</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Enhanced public access to environmental information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Convention</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Reductions of airborne emissions in the UNECE region</td>
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- 72% of respondents rated UNECE effective in the development of legally binding regulations, standards and technical recommendations as well as “soft law tools”

- Ability to sustain a network of bodies including servicing convention bodies, running implementation committees, collect and disseminate information across members.
"Everything that is done here, in Geneva, has a direct impact on every person on this planet, in any 24 hour period."

- Norms setting role of the UN not well understood, sometimes even ridiculed in the press.
- IRC activities @ UNECE are pursued in close partnership with a large number of IOs – many of them in Geneva.
- UNECE partners with: UN organizations, other int’l orgs, regional organizations, CSOs, industry associations, academia and research institutions.

**Steering Group on Statistics x Sustainable Development**

**Joint ECE – FAO WG on Forests**

**THE PEP: Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme**
UNECE tools benefit from public consultations and reviews

Non binding instrument (UN/CEFACT)

- Project Inception
- Requirement gathering
- Draft development
- Public review
- Project exit
- Publication

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Participation of non-Members

- UNECE tools are used throughout the world

- A few examples:
  - Aarhus convention
  - Statistics
  - World Vehicles Regulations
  - UN/CEFACT
  - PPPs

- Participation is from all world regions: for example African countries in the work on Agricultural Quality Standards, Mexico, Australia & New Zealand in the work of statistics, etc.

- Participation of UN non-UNECE member states is not necessarily through authorities (at times, representatives from NGOs or even business associations are authorized by capitals to represent the country at meetings)
Ensuring quality & implementation of IRC processes

- **Accountability framework**: UN wide
- **Assessment of member states**:
  - Environmental Performance Reviews: Assessment of the progress a country has made in reconciling its environmental and economic targets and in meeting its international environmental commitments
  - Innovation Performance Reviews: Recommendations & policy options to stimulate innovation
  - Country profiles on Housing and Land Management: overview of progress in related policies
  - Studies on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade: identify shortfalls in institutional frameworks, procedures, regulations, etc.
  - Assessments of national statistical systems
- **Technical assistance activities** – UNDA and bilateral funding for implementation of UNECE IRC tools
IRC @UNECE: challenges

- **Effective ways of sharing knowledge across the organization:** Especially important in the context of Agenda 2030 which asks our member States to work across sectors, and we need to do more to support their efforts.

- **Balancing the UNECE regional role with the demands from non-UNECE member states:** non-UNECE countries use UNECE standards, accede to its Conventions, participate in IRC, and benefit from its technical co-operation activities.
Thank you

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