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## Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

### Thirtieth session

Geneva, 11 and 12 July 2024

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Updates from the Advisory Group on the United Nations**

**Code for Trade and Transport Locations**

## Report of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations Advisory Group on its 2024 Meeting

Submitted by the secretariat for endorsement

### I. Introduction and attendance

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group held its 2024 meeting on 16 and 17 April 2024 in Hamburg, Germany. The meeting was attended by 24 delegates and experts in person and 12 delegates and experts online, representing national government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The following United Nations Member States were represented: Brazil, China\*, India\*, Indonesia, Japan\*, Mongolia\*<sup>1</sup> and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The following United Nations bodies and organizations participated in the meeting: the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Representatives of the following intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector participated: the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), the Bureau International des Containers (BIC), the Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA), the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), GS1, the Ship Message Design Group (SMDG), CargoProbe, the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS), CONAS BV, EUROGATE, GoSource, Hapag-Lloyd, Hanse Maritime Services, Maersk, Strabag, and Thanaleng Dry Port Lao PDR.

### II. Opening remarks

2. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) opened the meeting by welcoming the representatives of the group. She flagged the importance of UN/LOCODE for international trade, its economic impact and its relevance to environmental protection and sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> \* These national focal points connected remotely.

fisheries management. Despite broad recognition of UN/LOCODE relevance (e.g. as evident from its integration into the Maritime Single Window and the FAO-IMO-ILO<sup>2</sup>'s recommendations made at JWG5<sup>3</sup> for sustainable fisheries management), resource constraints persist. Resource constraints are particularly pronounced, given the need to shift toward modern platforms. The Division Director expressed her commitment to support efforts aimed at bolstering resource mobilization to sustain and enhance UN/LOCODE services, potentially streamlining the publication cycle.

3. The Director of Information Technology (IT) at Hapag-Lloyd underscored the pivotal role of UN/LOCODE in the realm of maritime transportation. He emphasized the importance of global standards, and recognized their role in enabling compatibility, interoperability and efficiency in resource utilization, particularly in the context of digitization. He noted that while the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has maintained the UN/EDIFACT<sup>4</sup> framework for over three decades, the transition from electronic data interchange (EDI) to application programming interface (API) technology is underway, potentially shaping future communication protocols. UN/LOCODE, also maintained by ECE-UN/CEFACT, stands out as the predominant identifier for geographic positions in the maritime industry and is crucial for various operations, from vessel schedules to terminal operations. Its universal adoption underscores its significance, with ongoing efforts to ensure data quality and address ambiguities. Hapag-Lloyd advocates for continued collaboration between industry stakeholders and international organizations like ECE-UN/CEFACT for the maintenance and enhancement of global standards.

### III. Procedural

4. The agenda of the meeting was approved. (**Decision 24-1**)
5. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group appointed Ms. Maria Teresa Chavarri (United States of America) as the Chair and Mr. Tiago Spengler (Brazil) as the vice-chair of the Advisory Group for a two-year term (2024-2025) by acclamation. (**Decision 24-2**)
6. The new Chair and Vice Chair committed to their service in their term and encouraged stakeholders to actively engage in the activities related to UN/LOCODE.

### IV. Report from the secretariat

7. The secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group reported on the following activities that took place since the 2023 meeting of the group:
  - The timely publication of UN/LOCODE releases 2023-1 and 2023-2;
  - The enhancement of the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network through a new nomination from Indonesia along with renominations from Mongolia and the United Kingdom;
  - The resolution of the critical cybersecurity issues in UN/LOCODE subsystem 1 and the successful passing of the United Nation Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT) cybersecurity audit;
  - The ECE participation at the fifth session of the Joint FAO-IMO-ILO Ad-hoc Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Related Matters (JWG5) (Geneva, 8-12 January 2024) where one recommendation was made concerning the promotion of the implementation of UN/LOCODE and the UN/FLUX

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<sup>2</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Maritime Organization (IMO)

<sup>3</sup> The fifth session of the Joint FAO-IMO-ILO Ad-hoc Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Related Matters (JWG5) (Geneva, 8-12 January 2024).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT)

standard to enhance communication and electronic exchange of data for sustainable fisheries management;

- The initiative to associate the UN/LOCODE with the GS1 Global Location Number (GLN);
- More use of UN/LOCODE to identify ports in the Maritime Single Window mandatory as of 2024;
- Observation of the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency's Task Force treatment of local official languages in subdivisions, which will help UN/LOCODE address different spelling of location names in the directory;
- The new source to update or maintain UN/LOCODE based on the UN/CEFACT JSON-LD code publication;
- The ongoing UN/LOCODE maintenance activities involving the validation of data maintenance requests (DMRs) by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team via regular virtual maintenance meetings;
- The UN/LOCODE Task Force kick-off meeting;
- The proposal for a new organigram of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, which includes the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team and the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team; and
- The project proposal which was presented on the UN/LOCODE ecosystem for fundraising to support the sustainable development of UN/LOCODE with extrabudgetary resources.

8. Delegates and participants agreed on the new organigram of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, proposed by the secretariat with two subgroups: the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to validate DMRs and the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team to deal with policy and other key issues raised by the UN/LOCODE community. The convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team is the Chair, and the convener of the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team is the Vice Chair. **(Decision 24-3)**

9. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat prepare a report on the performance of the nominated national focal points and report it to the next meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. **(Decision 24-4)**

## V. UN/LOCODE maintenance

10. The convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team reported on the UN/LOCODE DMR validation that took place during the recent maintenance cycles. She provided an overview of the team's work, achievements and challenges.

11. Following a workshop organized by the secretariat, Indonesia and the United Kingdom are reviewing their existing UN/LOCODE code lists through their national focal points (NFPs).

12. In response to a question raised by the representative of Maersk concerning the number of DMRs received during the maintenance cycles mentioned above, the secretariat confirmed that, since the setup of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, the amount of poor quality DMRs or, DMRs not in line with ECE Recommendation No. 16, has been dramatically reduced. This is due to information being shared with the DMR submitters during maintenance meetings to help them understand Recommendation 16.

13. In response to questions raised by the representative of CONAS BV, the secretariat clarified the UN/LOCODE maintenance policies:

- The UN/LOCODE is assigned to a location and cannot be changed. Only the attributes can be modified;
- The UN/LOCODE entry is maintained using a soft deletion approach. In other words, entries are not removed immediately from the database but marked with "X" to

indicate that the entry will be removed in the next release. This way, stakeholders have at least six months to contact the secretariat to revisit the deletion, if necessary; and

- The owners of UN/LOCODE child codes are responsible for maintenance of the child codes.
14. Delegates and participants expressed their gratitude to the following:
- The secretariat for their dedicated support and coordination;
  - The convenor of the Maintenance Team for her excellent work;
  - UN/LOCODE focal points and experts who have contributed to the DMR validation; and
  - The DMR submitters who were present at the maintenance meetings to facilitate the DMR validation by justifying their requests.
15. Delegates and participants agreed to indicate on the country list page on the ECE website which countries have already nominated an NFP and which countries have had their code list reviewed by the NFP nominated by the country. **(Decision 24-5)**
16. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat follow up on the recommendation made at the last UN/CEFACT Plenary to encourage nominations for the UN/LOCODE national focal points. **(Decision 24-6)**
17. The secretariat requested that the delegates and participants consider publishing the UN/LOCODE directory once per year instead of twice per year due to the very limited resources available within the secretariat.
18. Delegates and participants disagreed on publishing the UN/LOCODE directory once per year. Delegates and participants agreed to escalate this resource issue to mobilize more resources to support the UN/LOCODE. **(Decision 24-7)**

## VI. UN/LOCODE strategy

19. The convenor of the former UN/LOCODE Task Force reported on the task force work since its kick-off meeting (held virtually on 28 September 2023). According to the terms of reference, the UN/LOCODE Task Force established four subgroups:
- **Subgroup 1** to identify small fishery ports in the FAO Global Record;
  - **Subgroup 2** to perform a feasibility study on fast-tracking UN/LOCODE as an ISO standard;
  - **Subgroup 3** to address the co-existence of UN/LOCODEs assigned to locations and sub-locations; and
  - **Subgroup 4** to test the new re-engineered online data maintenance request (DMR) application.
20. Subgroup 1 and Subgroup 2 are currently engaged in ongoing efforts to address two tasks mentioned above. The Subgroup 3 leader organized several working meetings to discuss how to address the sub-locations assigned with UN/LOCODEs in the existing code list. Subgroup 4 accomplished the testing before the cybersecurity audit on the fixing of UN/LOCODE subsystem 1.
21. The leader of Subgroup 3 reported on its findings regarding the definition of sub-locations and the granularity of size. The issue of code confusion could be addressed by introducing a hierarchy to the code list for sub-locations. The discussion revolved around the methods for identifying sub-locations, whether through geographical coordinates or geofencing. It was noted that the level of granularity varies from one country to another.
22. The representative of Hapag-Lloyd presented a potential solution to identify sub-locations by additional column(s) in the directory to indicate the location to which the sub-location belongs. The secretariat confirmed that such a change would require the revision of ECE Recommendation No. 16 through the UN/CEFACT Open Development Process. The

outputs of the Subgroups under the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team might trigger a future revision of ECE Recommendation No. 16.

23. The representative of UPU presented the administrative levels standardized by UPU for an address solution in a country – international postal address components and template language (S42).

24. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat circulate this document (S42) for review and that feedback be sent to Subgroup 3 so that they can explore the possibility of using this document to clarify the level of sub-locations in the UN/LOCODE directory. **(Decision 24-8)**

25. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team task Subgroup 3 with continuing its work to address the sub-location issue and that its recommendation(s) be submitted to the next advisory group meeting. **(Decision 24-9)**

26. The leader of Subgroup 4 provided an overview of its accomplishments, focusing on efforts to address cybersecurity concerns within Subsystem 1 and the sustainable development of the UN/LOCODE ecosystem from a system perspective. Key highlights included the findings of the cybersecurity audit, the technical work plan for improvements, future perspectives, and the subsequent recommendations made by the group. The conclusion of the discussion emphasized the importance of devising an action plan to diligently oversee the execution of technical resolutions.

27. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team task Subgroup 4 with continuing their work on the UN/LOCODE systems, providing recommendations on options for the re-engineering of the new system and collaborating on Git-based open-source pilot solutions. It also suggested that the group explore suitable graphical user interfaces (GUI) to enhance the useability of any implementations. **(Decision 24-10)**

28. Delegates and participants requested that the representative of IMO liaise with the ECE secretariat to clarify the following questions and to report to the 2025 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. **(Decision 24-11)**:

- Is it enough to identify a location in international waters with an International Safety Management (ISM) Code?
- What is the international practice to identify a floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) unit?

## VII. Overview of new developments and follow-up

29. The domain coordinator of UN/CEFACT provided an update on the Geofence project initiated by BIC, and the UN/CEFACT Project – White Paper on Geofencing Facilities in Transport and Logistics. BIC cooperates with SMDG to share data in their respective databases by using APIs and has established a Geofence Review Panel, drawing inspiration from the UN/LOCODE maintenance mechanism.

30. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat contact OpenStreetMap to explore the possibility of adding the UN/LOCODE as an official tag to allow the Geofence to be searchable with UN/LOCODE. **(Decision 24-12)**

31. The representative of EMSA presented the updates on the European Maritime Single Window Environment (EMSWe). EMSA developed and maintains centrally the location codes database (CLD), based on UN/LOCODE, used as a reference for locations by all maritime applications of the SafeSeaNet (SSN) ecosystem as well as national systems of the Member States (SSN and NSW). He also shared the statistics on the use of UN/LOCODE in SSN.

32. The representatives of CONAS BV, GS1 Netherlands member, introduced the initiative to associate UN/LOCODE with the GS1 Global Location Number (GLN). They presented its Global Location Data Service, making location data from different sources

(such as UN/LOCODE, GS1 GLN, IMO Port Facility Number, SMDG, BIC, IATA and other location datasets) easily findable on its portal.

33. Delegates and participants expressed their appreciation for efforts to associate UN/LOCODE with other location codes, including the UN/LOCODE child codes, and encouraged other practices to provide a better service on location identification. **(Decision 24-13)**

34. The representative of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN<sup>5</sup>) presented the update on the UNGEGN World Geographic Names Database. This database provides governments, and the public at large, access to an authoritative global repository of standardized geographical names of countries and cities. She mentioned that the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management was working on developing a global unique identifier for cities.

35. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat follow up with UNGEGN to explore the possibility of using UN/LOCODE as the unique identifier for cities in the UNGEGN World Geographic Names Database. **(Decision 24-14)**

36. The UN/CEFACT expert presented the UN/CEFACT JSON-LD code publication and demonstrated a way in which Git-based technologies can be applied for DMR submission, maintenance and publication. She also provided technical details on DMR submission via issue templates, automated validation, data transformation, levels of permissions and other capabilities that are essential for effective data management processes.

37. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team Subgroup 4 conduct a feasibility study and pilot a proof of concept for maintaining and publishing the UN/LOCODE with a Git-based open-source solution. **(Decision 24-15)**

38. The representative of CargoProbe provided valuable insights into the quality of the UN/LOCODE data and identified areas for enhancement. He highlighted issues concerning incomplete data fields, particularly inaccurate coordinates for significant trading locations. Moreover, he showcased a demonstration of an error indication and correction script. Additionally, he conducted comparisons between UN/LOCODE data and other sources to provide additional context. The analyst showed that 1.3 per cent of UN/LOCODE entries have wrong coordinates and that 2.8 per cent of entries have non-existent subdivision codes, among other results.

39. Delegates and participants are invited to contact CargoProbe to analyse the data quality of the UN/LOCODE code list in the country in question. **(Decision 24-16)**

## VIII. Future work

40. To mobilize extra-budgetary funds for the sustainable development of UN/LOCODE, the secretariat drafted a project proposal to share with potential donors. The secretariat presented the project proposal on the UN/LOCODE ecosystem for fundraising, including for the following:

- A new re-engineered ICT system, covering the whole UN/LOCODE data life cycle, to maintain, generate and publish the UN/LOCODE directory on an agreed regular basis;
- An enhanced collaborative mechanism for the UN/LOCODE community to ensure the governance and development of the UN/LOCODE standard by revising ECE Recommendation No.16 and clarifying the policy issues;
- Capacity-building and knowledge transfer for a consistent and standardized application of Recommendation No.16; and
- Expansion of UN/LOCODE use.

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<sup>5</sup> See website at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/>.

41. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team resume the work of Subgroup 1 for fishing port identification and Subgroup 2 for the feasibility study on making UN/LOCODE an ISO standard. **(Decision 24-17)**

42. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team set up a Subgroup 5 and nominate a leader to study feasibility and make a recommendation on the business model for UN/LOCODE fundraising. **(Decision 24-18)**

## **IX. Other business**

43. The next meeting modality will be in person. To meet the submission deadline of the meeting report to the UN/CEFACT Plenary for endorsement, the date of the next meeting should be at least three months before the UN/CEFACT Plenary. Delegates and participants discussed a possible date and place to hold the next annual meeting.

44. The representative from the IMO expressed the IMO position on supporting the continuous development of the UN/LOCODE system and will confirm if the IMO can host the next UN/LOCODE Advisory Group meeting in London, the United Kingdom.

45. Delegates and participants requested that the secretariat organize an ad-hoc meeting back-to-back with or during the UN/CEFACT Forum at the end of 2024 in Rome, Italy. **(Decision 24-19)**

46. Delegates and participants requested that the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team set up Subgroup 6, led by Mr. Falk Bethke, to deal with how to identify canals and nautical waterways. **(Decision 24-20)**

47. Delegates and participants expressed their gratitude to Hapag-Lloyd for their excellent hosting and conduct of this meeting, especially to Mr. Michael Schroeder and Mr. Heng Yeong Chiam. **(Decision 24-21)**

## **X. Adoption of the report**

48. Delegates and participants agreed on decisions 1 to 21 in the draft report. **(Decision 24-22)**

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