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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

UN/LOCODE Advisory Group

Fourth annual meeting

Geneva (online), 27 November 2020

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Report from the secretariat

Report on activities of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group since its third annual meeting

I. Summary

1. In keeping with the practice of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group and according to the decisions made at its third annual meeting, the secretariat prepares a report detailing the activities undertaken by the Group since the last annual meeting. The Group is invited to review the report and to provide comments.
2. The full report provides a summary of the major activities conducted by the Group and the developments related to UN/LOCODE in the business community, such as supporting the use of UN/LOCODE to identify the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) designated ports by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to halt Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, the publication of the revised UNECE Recommendation 16, the UN/LOCODE maintenance and the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project.

II. Introduction

3. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) identifies locations related to international trade around the world. It is a five-character code where the first two characters represent the International Standards Organization (ISO) country code followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
4. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group advises and supports the UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT for the maintenance and further development of UN/LOCODE.
5. The UNECE EXCOM endorsed the establishment of the Group in June 2017. Its first annual meeting took place in Geneva from 30 November to 1 December 2017; its second annual meeting was held in Hangzhou, China, on 25-26 October 2018.
6. At its third annual meeting held in Xiamen, China, on 27-28 November 2019, the first Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, Ms. Sue Probert, could not serve a further term due to her heavy workload as the Chair of UN/CEFACT. Mr. Qiu Yueming,

from the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS), was appointed as Chair and Ms. Sue Probert as Vice-Chair.

7. Despite difficulties and challenges caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with the support of the secretariat, based on the decisions made at the third annual meeting, the Group has taken the following activities to provide better services to the user community.

III. Overview of recent relevant developments

8. UN/LOCODE Directory 2019-2 and 2020-1 have been published on the UNECE website as scheduled (<http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>).

9. Following Decision 19-08, the secretariat has made an on-going effort to enhance the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network. Since the last annual meeting, the Network has been expanded by the new nominations of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and the re-nominations of France, India, and Morocco (<http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/focalpoint.html>).

10. During the third session of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries in Geneva on 4 February 2020, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations proposed the use of UN/LOCODE to identify fishing ports formally designated by Parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), to facilitate controls for combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. FAO also informed of plans to build a database which includes the place of fishing vessels. This database would become a component of the Global Record Information System, maintained by FAO. FAO seeks to advise on the use of UN/LOCODE to identify ports of registration.

11. The secretariat met with representatives of FAO and with other UN/LOCODE stakeholders in the fishery. As a first step, the secretariat drafted, jointly with FAO, the concept paper (UN/LOCODE-AG/2020/INF.3) and submitted it for the approval of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group as a general policy. The paper proposes to cover all PSMA designated ports in UN/LOCODE. In other words, UN/LOCODE should be assigned to every PSMA designated port. What is more, a tailored maintenance mechanism was proposed by the secretariat and it was agreed with FAO.

12. The European Union (EU) requested the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to prepare the technical specifications, standards and procedures for a Common Location Database (CLD) of the European Maritime Single Window environment (EMSWe). Article 15 of the EMSWe Regulation (EU 2019/1239) foresees that the CLD shall be established and be made available to the Maritime National Single Windows (MNSW) for the facilitation of ship reporting. The EMSWe CLD shall hold a reference list of location codes, including the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE), the SafeSeaNet-specific codes, and the port facility codes as registered in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). EMSA contacted the secretariat and discussed the impacts triggered by the revised Recommendation 16 and further cooperation. The secretariat invited the UN/LOCODE Focal Point of EMSA to present their work related to CLD at the fourth annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

13. The World Food Program (WFP) decided to adopt UN/LOCODE to identify their offices in the field. In this regard, the Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) are submitted for validation. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team is fully aware of this new use case.

14. The secretariat liaised with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) on the official version of location names maintained by UNGEGN. The secretariat invited the UNGEGN representative to present the work and the output of UNGEGN at the fourth annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

15. Because of the dependency on ISO 3166-1 and ISO 3166-2, the secretariat participates in the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency and ISO TC 046/WG2. The ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency is in charge of the maintenance of the code lists related to ISO 3166, and ISO TC 046/WG2 is responsible for the standard itself. Two significant ballots are related to ISO 3166 in 2020:

- Approval of ISO 3166-1:2020, ISO 3166-2:2020 and ISO 3166-3:2020

ISO standard reviews are scheduled as a routine. The last review of ISO 3166 was conducted in 2013.

- Approval of the revised Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency

IV. Revised UNECE Recommendation 16

16. As one of the main decisions made at the first meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the Group invited UN/CEFACT to initiate a project to revise UNECE Recommendation 16. (Decision 17-01).

17. The outcomes of the project, including the revised Recommendation, guidelines, and three Annex, were submitted to the twenty-sixth session of the UN/CEFACT Plenary. In the light of the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, this Plenary was canceled, and instead, a virtual consultation took place on 4 May 2020, where the revised Recommendation 16 was presented. The revised Recommendation 16 was then approved under a specific silent procedure, a process approved by the Executive Committee under Rule 20, the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, as contained in ECE/EX/3/Rev1.

18. Following Decision 19-03, the secretariat has implemented a UN/LOCODE Child Code Repository on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/child-code.html>), as outlined in the revised Recommendation 16.

19. Based on the information gathered during the revision of Recommendation 16, three samples were published:

- Bureau de International Containers (BIC) Container Facility Code
- International Maritime Organization (IMO) Port Facility Number
- Shipplanning Message Development Group (SMDG) Master Terminals List

20. Any stakeholders, who wish to contribute their child code list example, are invited to submit their use case using the official template published on the UN/LOCODE website to uncefact@un.org. The use case must have a clear link to UN/LOCODE.

21. These use cases do not engage the secretariat in any way, and they do not constitute an endorsement of any kind. Submissions are presented as is and were only checked for grammar and spelling.

V. UN/LOCODE maintenance

22. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team validated the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs), led by two co-convenors - one from the public sector and the other from the private sector - and with substantive support provided by the secretariat.

23. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team has implemented the new maintenance procedure to improve the data quality of UN/LOCODE by the consistent understanding of Recommendation 16 and the application of validation rules. It is beneficial use of the collaboration of an international team of experts, consisting of nominated UN/LOCODE Focal Points, industry experts, and the secretariat, and the valuable resources of both the public sector and the private sector.

24. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team conducts its work via online meetings. The secretariat aims to schedule the maintenance meetings to facilitate the participation of experts in all time zones. Despite COVID-19 imposed challenges, the Maintenance Team tried to complete the DMR validation and the releases 2019-2 and 2020-1 were published as scheduled.

25. Under the new procedure, the Maintenance Team established the practice to invite the DMR submitters to join the meeting to explain and justify their requests. It provides a platform to communicate directly between the DMR validators and the DMR submitters. In this way, the submitters get to know the UN/LOCODE inclusion criteria and avoid spam submissions in the future. As a result, the amount of inferior-quality DMRs decreased dramatically.

26. The Maintenance Team had planned a face-to-face meeting to discuss the DMR validation during the UN/CEFACT Forum (Decision 19-07) in April 2020. Because of the cancellation of the Forum, the meeting of the Maintenance Team was canceled.

27. Following the volunteer presentation on the observations of the UN/LOCODE maintenance at the third annual meeting, the Co-convenor of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team was invited to prepare a study report and present it at the fourth annual meeting (Decision 19-10). This paper (UN/LOCODE-AG/2020/INF.4) was made available for discussion.

28. Besides validation of an individual DMR, the team has discussed many maintenance issues, some of which are addressed in the agenda of the fourth annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for further discussion and decisions, such as:

- The Maintenance Team rejected certain DMRs for assigning a UN/LOCODE to new ports and instead suggested to identify these locations through a UN/LOCODE Child Code of BIC, IMO, or SMDG. However, national authorities insisted on having an individual UN/LOCODE assigned to uniquely identify these locations as they are in distinct locations and managed independently in terms of economy, finance, administration and management. If this request is approved by the UN/LOCODE National Focal Point, the secretariat will support this position in accordance with the revised UN/LOCODE Recommendation 16.
- After reviewing the current code list, the UN/LOCODE Focal Point for Brazil raised two issues:
 - Locations with Function “7”
Function “7” is specified as Fixed Transport Installation, such as oil pipeline terminal, electric power lines, ropeway terminals. For example, an oil pipeline terminal is active until the end of the life cycle of the oil well. In the case of the dysfunction of the location, what is the best practice recommended by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team: either to remove the entry or to remain it by replacing Function “7” with Function “0”?
 - Entries with Status “RQ”
The user community is not encouraged to use entries with Status “RQ” because they have not been validated sufficiently. Is it a clever idea to remove them to release the UN/LOCODEs? The secretariat reiterated that we should be incredibly careful to remove any UN/LOCODE entries unless we are under pressure to release the UN/LOCODEs for the country whose available UN/LOCODEs are going to be used up.
- The UN/LOCODE National Focal Point for France reported that France is in the process of drastically reducing the number of localities, with an average of one hundred disappearing every year. It resulted in that several localities were merged into a newly created locality, each of which is assigned with a UN/LOCODE. What is a solution to deal with such a case? If we remove the old entries and create

a new entry, we will prefer to remain a link between the new assignment and the legacy assignments to the old locations?

VI. UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project

29. As a positive response to Decision 18-08, the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) volunteered to contribute resources to the effort of the secretariat to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system. A project was kicked off in July 2019, jointly by the secretariat and the volunteer experts from CNIS. The project is overseen by the Steering Committee, based on the Terms of Reference of the Project agreed by UNECE and CNIS.

30. Following Decision 19-13 and based on the Business Requirement Analysis report approved at the third annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the project team has engaged in developing the new system. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team has overcome all difficulties and managed to develop the new system as scheduled. The system is ready for presentation at the fourth annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

31. As approved by the Steering Committee, the testing environment is hosted by UNECE and open for a group of experts identified by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team for testing and comments. For the sake of a smooth transfer from the current system to the new system, the new system is expected to be put in place in the second quarter of 2021, after the cut-off date of UN/LOCODE release 2021-1.

32. All information related to the Project is shared on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE). What is more, for the sake of effective communication, the project team has issued newsletters to share the progress of the Project in September and December 2019 and in March, May, August, September 2020.

33. Following Decision 19-11, IMO prepared the first draft of the Application Programming Interface (API) specification between the new UN/LOCODE system and the IMO Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS). Because of the cancellation of the UN/CEFACT Forum in April 2020, the secretariat unenabled to organize the meeting during the Forum to discuss the draft. Alternatively, the secretariat held an online meeting at the end of April 2020 to discuss the draft by inviting the UN/CEFACT experts of the UN/CEFACT API projects. The project leader of the two UN/CEFACT API projects (RDM2API and API Town Plan) provided comments and did not see anything fundamentally wrong in the direction suggested by the draft.

34. The project team finally agreed to provide UN/LOCODE web services based on the specification. The secretariat will continue to respect the UN policy to make UN/LOCODE freely accessible with a balance point between the business demands and available resources. Therefore, the UN/LOCODE APIs will be designed and implemented in an incremental manner and in close collaboration with industry stakeholders to identify priority needs.

35. The secretariat finalized the UN/LOCODE API specification (UN/LOCODE-AG/2020/INF.5) that specifies REST APIs with a JSON data structure. The project team has worked with IMO to make a pilot implementation.