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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Matters arising since the twenty-first session

And other International Developments

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The secretariat will report on matters arising since the twenty-first session. This document also provides a summary of the main international developments related to UN/CEFACT and an overview of the outreach and support activities of the secretariat to enhance implementation of UNECE and UN/CEFACT Recommendations, Standards and Tools.

This document is for information*.

* This document is submitted in line with the Programme of work of the UN/CEFACT for 2015-2016
ECE/EX/2015/L.14



I. UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM)

A. EXCOM decisions regarding UN/CEFACT

1. At its 77th meeting on 18 May 2015, the EXCOM approved the UN/CEFACT 2015-2016 Programme of work, as contained in the annex to document ECE/EX/2015/L.14.

B. EXCOM UN/CEFACT Contact Group

2. At its 67th session, the EXCOM decided to establish an EXCOM Contact Group for UN/CEFACT to provide liaison with the UN/CEFACT Bureau/Chair.

3. The new Chair of the UN/CEFACT Bureau, Mr. Lance Thompson, elected on 17 February 2015, met with the Contact Group on 25 March 2015. The Chair made a presentation of UN/CEFACT activities and provided an overview of his planned strategy for taking UN/CEFACT forward over the coming years.

4. The Chair also met with the Contact Group on 21 September 2015 to provide a further update on UN/CEFACT current and planned activities.

5. The Contact Group expressed their appreciation for these meetings and indicated that they should continue to be held in the future.

II. International developments

A. World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement

6. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) remains one of the most important international developments for the work of UN/CEFACT. The Agreement provides a legal framework for the implementation of many UNECE and UN/CEFACT Recommendations and Standards developed over the past 50 years. It also provides a powerful boost to the political will to implement these measures.

7. As of 20 January 2016, 68 countries had ratified the Agreement. A total of 108 countries (two-thirds of WTO Members) need to ratify the Agreement for it to enter into force.

8. Several new and revised UNECE - UN/CEFACT Recommendations directly support the implementation of the WTO TFA. These include:

- Revised UNECE Recommendation 4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies
- UNECE Recommendation 40 on Consultation Approaches

9. In addition, the UNECE secretariat has been active in supporting the implementation of the Agreement. Specific activities include:

- Organization of a workshop at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015 - Delivering on the Trade Facilitation Agreement: The role of standards and regulatory frameworks (www.unece.org/index.php?id=41713);

- Co-organization of the Global Trade Facilitation Partnership (GFP)¹ meeting in Geneva in April 2015 - The Role of the Private Sector in Supporting the Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (<http://www.unece.org/?id=39561>);
- Organization of a seminar on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and National Trade Facilitation Committees in Kiev, Ukraine, in February 2015 (www.unece.org/index.php?id=42113);
- Participation in international workshops and meetings to demonstrate the role of UN/CEFACT in supporting the Agreement (see Section III below).

10. The main focus of international organizations and donors over the coming year will be to help countries analyse their requirements for implementing the Agreement and to support them in the actual implementation. Coordination of such support for the WTO TFA amongst international organizations is key to ensuring efficiency of delivery and avoidance of overlaps.

11. To this end, UNECE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) in April 2015² to coordinate related activities supporting the Agreement and to develop and deliver joint products and support services. Tangible results under this MOU include the restructuring of the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) as the UN TFIG, and using this tool jointly as a key learning mechanism for trade facilitation. Similarly, the three organizations jointly contribute to the UNCTAD Repository of National Trade Facilitation Bodies³ and ITC's recent publication on establishing such bodies is primarily based on UNECE Recommendation 4. Several other related publications were jointly released by the three organizations. The MoU is intended to further strengthen the cooperation between these organizations going forward.

12. UNECE also signed an MoU with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in May 2015⁴ and the two bodies are working together to explore ways of assisting developing economies to increase the efficiency of their air cargo systems and thus enhance their competitiveness and economic development potential.

B. UN Sustainable Development Goals

13. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of aspirational global goals with 169 targets adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 (A/RES/70/1).⁵ The SDGs will be a key reference point for all development actions and, particularly, those undertaken by the United Nations over the coming years.

14. The activities carried out by UN/CEFACT can provide an important contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools make it simpler, faster and cheaper to trade between countries, thus contributing to growth, productivity and employment. The electronic tools like Single Window and paperless trade systems promoted by UN/CEFACT make it easier for companies to trade, while reducing the

¹ GFP Members includes the World Bank, International Chambers of Commerce (ICC), International Trade Centre (ITC), OECD, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNESCAP, UNIDO and the World Customs Organization (WCO) – see <http://www.gfptt.org/partners> for the full list

² https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/mou/MoU_between_UNECE__ITC_and_UNCTAD_22_04_2015.pdf

³ <http://unctad.org/en/DTL/TLB/Pages/TF/Committees/default.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.iata.org/pressroom/pr/Pages/2015-05-12-01.aspx>

⁵ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

need for paper documents and increasing Government revenue collection. UN/CEFACT recommendations and standards also have knock-on effects on a broad range of SDGs, even the most overarching goals such as poverty eradication (SDG 1) and the reduction of inequality within and between countries (SDG 10). UN/CEFACT's work also contributes to the achievement of goals related to environmental sustainability, for example through the exchange of information to support sustainable fishing or the safe transport of dangerous goods. Therefore, it can be expected that UN/CEFACT will be a very important actor in the upcoming implementation of the SDGs.

15. UNECE has prepared a short publication on the relationship between the work of UN/CEFACT and the SDGs and this is available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/publica/UNCEFACT_and_the_SDGs.pdf

III. Outreach and Support Services

16. In January 2016, UNECE concluded its project with the Greek Government and the European Commission Task Force on Greece (TFGR) to help implement the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy and Roadmap⁶ (developed in 2012 with the support of the UNECE secretariat). This project created tangible benefits for the Greek economy as evidenced by major improvements in the World Bank Doing Business Report and Logistics Performance Index over the period. For details, see <http://tfig.unece.org/cases/Greece.pdf>.

17. Based on its trade facilitation work in Greece and other countries, the secretariat, with input from UN/CEFACT, developed a Guide to Developing a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap. This is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41781>.

18. The secretariat also provided focussed outreach support within its core area of expertise to UN Member States at the request of national governments and other international organizations. This included:

- Assistance to UNIDO in undertaking and providing training in Business Process Analysis for the leather hides and leather shoe industry (at the request of UNIDO);
- Presentations to the IATA Air Cargo industry on UN/CEFACT Standards and Tools to help reduce inefficiencies in information exchange (at the request of IATA);
- Presentation to EU Member States in Budapest on UNECE and UN/CEFACT Recommendations, Standards and Tools to support the implementation of the WTO TFA (at the request of the European Commission).

19. In 2014-2015, the United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs) (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA)⁷ in collaboration with UNCTAD, OECD, ITC and a few other international organizations conducted a global survey to collect relevant data and information on trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation in their respective Member States. The survey reports are available at <http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>.

⁶ http://www.mindev.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Greece_Trade_Facilitation_Strategy_Roadmap_Oct-2012.pdf

⁷ Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

A. Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide

20. The UN Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) is an online knowledge management and training tool to help countries simplify and harmonize cross-border trade procedures and information flows. It contains information about major trade facilitation instruments and tools and links to external references and data sources from all key international organizations involved in trade facilitation. It is a key tool to support the implementation of the WTO TFA.

21. The Guide is available in English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic. The Arabic version was launched in April 2015.

22. With the support of the Swedish Government (the original sponsor of the project), the secretariat undertook a major review of TFIG in 2015. This included a complete update of all material from key organizations in the Guide; the addition of two new Itineraries (one on how to establish a National Trade Facilitation Committee and the second on how to develop a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap); new material from additional agencies – in particular the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – on testing and quality infrastructure; and the addition of new or updated case stories. We expect this revised version to go “on-line” in the second quarter of 2016.

23. The TFIG has become well established as a major reference resource for trade facilitation policy makers and implementers around the world. The TFIG website receives approximately half a million hits per month and received 6.7 million hits from 170 different countries in 2015. The website received more than 330,000 unique visitors in the last three years.

B. Regional advisory services in 2015-2016

24. The Regional Adviser continued to manage projects and activities supporting countries in the implementation of the UNECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations and Standards. Following up on the Russian contribution project on trade facilitation and the Single Window for the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU),⁸ the Regional Adviser co-organized with the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) two train-the-trainer seminars on Business Process Analysis. He also participated in two national seminars on the implementation of the project decisions and products. The deliverables of the project were published in three volumes, notably in the Collection of Legal Acts for 2014-2015 on the implementation and development of the Single Window mechanism in the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union («Сборник правовых актов за 2014-2015 годы по внедрению и развитию механизма ‘единого окна’ в государствах-членах Евразийского таможенного союза»), which include the General Directions for building Single Window mechanisms in the EEU, a plan for the implementation of these General Directions, and relevant high-level decisions of the leaders of the countries to implement the General Directions and the plan. UN/CEFACT experts, including two Vice-Chairs of UN/CEFACT, supported this process. Also as a result of this work, EEC experts became involved in the drafting of UNECE Recommendation 36 on Single Window interoperability.

25. The Regional Adviser continued his support for the trade facilitation programme in Ukraine, notably: an assessment of the readiness of Ukraine to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement was carried out, assisting the country in the categorization of its

⁸ Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation.

readiness to implement these measures (A, B, and C category measures, as per the WTO TFA); a peer review of the Port Community System (local Single Window) in Odessa (see www.singlewindow.org); and a study on public-private partnership as the basis for developing a local Single Window were carried out. The draft National Trade Facilitation Strategy was developed further and is currently pending official endorsement and further development by the Government. The Interagency Working Group on Trade Facilitation and Logistics of Ukraine received further support, including for its transformation into a Ukrainian National Trade Facilitation Committee as per the WTO TFA.

26. An assessment of the readiness of Kazakhstan to implement the WTO TFA and a training seminar on the implementation of trade facilitation measures (particularly in relation to the WTO TFA) were also carried out during this period.

27. The above two projects in Ukraine and Kazakhstan were undertaken in cooperation with UNCTAD.

28. The Regional Adviser continues the support for the work on Trade of the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA). Notably, he organized a brainstorming on the future work of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Trade, back-to-back with the WTO Aid-for-Trade annual meeting in July 2015.

29. The Regional Adviser organized other trainings and advisory missions, including:

(a) Two training events based on the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) for transition economies including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, as well as Afghanistan, including a training seminar undertaken for the OSCE Border Management College in Dushanbe.

(b) Advisory missions in support of trade facilitation to CEFTA2006 (the Western Balkans and Moldova), Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Czech Republic, and other transition economies.

(c) Other capacity-building and advisory missions organized with a range of development partners including UNDP, UNCTAD, the Eurasian Economic Commission, GIZ, USAID, and others.
