



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
11 May 2016

Original: English

Executive Committee

**Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business**

**Twenty-second session**  
Geneva, 21-22 April 2016

## **Report of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) on its twenty-second session**

### **I. Attendance**

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its twenty-second Plenary session in Geneva from 21 to 22 April 2016.
2. The following countries were represented: Austria, China, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), United States of America (United States), and Viet Nam.
3. The following United Nations organizations participated in the meeting: International Trade Centre (ITC) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The following non-governmental organizations also participated in the meeting: GS1 and International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
4. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) opened the meeting. She drew particular attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and emphasized the need for all stakeholders to contribute to their implementation. UN/CEFACT should seek to strengthen partnerships by ensuring transparency, developing quality deliverables, and making processes and outputs understandable to a wider public.

### **II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)**

5. The Chair reviewed the draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/1. He announced that the document under Item 7a, "Recommendation on Public-Private Partnerships in Trade Facilitation" would be presented as a draft for information only (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/INF 1).
6. The Plenary adopted the agenda as proposed (**Decision 16-01**).

### III. Election (Agenda Item 2)

7. An election was held to fill the position vacated when one of the previously elected Vice Chairs was elected Chair. The position will be for the remaining term of the initial election (2016-2017).

8. The secretariat recalled the background to the election, as well as the steps taken to request the nomination of candidates. The secretariat received one nomination, from the Delegation of the United Kingdom, for Ms. Sylvia (Sue) Probert.

9. One delegation inquired about the term of the vacant position (2016-2017) and whether, considering the heavy workload of the Bureau, this election should not be for a three-year term. The secretariat explained that the Legal Advisor of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) was consulted on this matter and, in his opinion, this election should be only for the period that remains from the mandate of the previous Vice Chair whom he or she will replace.

10. The Plenary elected by acclamation Ms. Sylvia (Sue) Probert as a UN/CEFACT Vice Chair for the period 2016-2017 (**Decision 16-02**).

### IV. Matters arising since the twenty-first session (Agenda Item 3)

11. The Acting Chief of the UNECE Trade Facilitation Section presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/3, "Matters arising since the twenty-first session". She reported that the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the UN/CEFACT 2015-2016 Programme of Work. EXCOM also decided to establish a Contact Group for UN/CEFACT to provide liaison with the UN/CEFACT Bureau/Chair. The Bureau Chair met twice with the EXCOM Contact Group during 2015.

12. She highlighted the relevance of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) to UN/CEFACT's work. Several new and revised ECE Recommendations directly support the implementation of the WTO TFA, including Recommendation 4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies and Recommendation 40 on Consultation Approaches. The UNECE secretariat has been active in supporting the implementation of the Agreement through the organization of workshops and meetings on this topic.

13. The Acting Chief pointed out the importance of coordination amongst international organizations to ensure efficient and effective support to countries in implementing the WTO TFA. To this end, UNECE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNCTAD and ITC in April 2015 and with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in May 2015.

14. The work of UN/CEFACT also is very relevant for the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN/CEFACT's recommendations and standards make it cheaper and faster to trade and exchange information. This, in turn, fosters trade and contributes to increased productivity and employment in countries. UNECE has prepared a short publication on the contribution of the work of UN/CEFACT to the SDGs.

15. The Regional Adviser presented advisory services carried out in support of trade development and facilitation in the transition economies. The three key areas of work were: support for implementation of the WTO TFA, Single Window, and National Trade Facilitation Bodies. He emphasized the importance of working on trade facilitation implementation with countries and encouraged continued support for such work.

16. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division briefly presented a new initiative between United Nations bodies to establish an online Focal Point to help member States, donors and development banks to identify resources within the United Nations system to support trade facilitation. The objective is to help identify available expertise and resources to respond to the needs identified and to encourage, when appropriate, the development of joint proposals. She invited countries to consider funding the development of the Focal Point website.

17. The representative of Ukraine expressed gratitude to UNECE for the work of the Regional Adviser and its coordination work with other organizations. He also stated that he would consult with the Government of Ukraine about supporting the development of the United Nations Trade Facilitation Focal Point website.

18. Two delegations inquired about the possibility of overlap between this work and the work of the WTO and others to support implementation of the WTO TFA. The secretariat explained that the WTO is leading this work and there is close coordination between the organizations involved and good communication is maintained to ensure that the work is complementary. At the same time, the proposed Focal Point website is intended to be a tool to assist the WTO and others in their work. Each participating organization has pledged to provide “active human resources” behind the website to research and coordinate responses from the United Nations system to the requests from the WTO and other organizations as well as individual countries.

19. The Chair of UN/CEFACT highlighted the extensive work carried out by the secretariat on outreach and support at the national, regional and international levels. He also drew attention to the difficulties faced by the secretariat in terms of resources and encouraged the Plenary to support the secretariat going forward in these areas.

20. The secretariat also expressed its gratitude to Sweden for its latest contribution, which had allowed the secretariat to update the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG), and called on countries to continue to support this initiative.

21. The Plenary took note of the report on matters arising and requested that the secretariat report on matters arising again in 2017 (**Decision 16-03**).

## **V. Bureau overview of recent developments (Agenda Item 4)**

22. The Chair briefed the delegations on recent developments within the Bureau and invited each Bureau Vice Chair to report on the activities within their Programme Development Areas (PDAs) and relevant work by UN/CEFACT experts.

23. The Vice Chair in charge of the International Trade Procedures PDA reported on the finalization of a number of recommendation projects which are presented for noting under Item 7. She also presented the projects currently being worked on within her domains. These included the revision of Recommendation 1 (UN Layout Key), the Recommendation 36 project on Single Window Interoperability and the recently approved project on Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanisms. She also briefly explained work items which she expects will be launched as projects in the near future including projects on: Gender in Trade Facilitation; Disaster Recovery of Single Window Systems; Key vocabulary around Single Windows and Single Window Self-Assessment Model.

24. The Vice Chair in charge of the Supply Chain PDA provided an update on his domains' projects. These included: the Revised Remittance Advice project; the Purchase Order Financing project; the Integration of Trade Finance and Supply Chain Finance into Trade Facilitation background research project; the Supply Chain Reference Data Model (SCRDM); background research on public procurement using international standards; the

Multi-Modal Transport project (MMT); and the Verified Gross Mass (VERMAS) project. He also announced that the Transport Domain was undertaking harmonization work on the Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business (FAL Compendium) in close collaboration with its original authoring organization, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as well as the World Customs Organization (WCO) Data Model Project Team and ISO Technical Committee 8 (TC 8).

25. The Vice Chair in charge of the Regulatory PDA reported on the progress of projects within his PDA. This included the Recommendation project for ensuring legally significant trusted trans-boundary electronic interaction, the transboundary movement of waste, and the Journal Book project. He also announced that a new activity on cyber security is being included in the work programme of the eGovernment domain.

26. The Vice Chair in charge of the Sectoral PDA began by briefly presenting the many existing activities being worked on in the agro-food portfolio.<sup>1</sup> He went on to explain the key issues in agriculture, i.e. sustainability, food safety, market access, traceability and transparency. He continued by reporting on the general activities of the other Sectoral domains, notably on the progress of the Small-scale Lodging Houses and Tourism Information project.

27. The Vice Chair in charge of the Methodology and Technology PDA reported on the evolution of work in his PDA since the last Plenary. This included the Bureau decision to support the experts' proposal to use only the CCTS 2.01, the XML NDR 2.1 and the CCBDA<sup>2</sup> for UN/CEFACT's development activities. He reported on the recent publications of UN/EDIFACT, XML schema and the Core Component Library. He informed the Plenary of the results from two internal projects, the Library Review project and the Conformance project, both of which should result in future projects for UN/CEFACT deliverables. He highlighted discussions within his domain on UN/CEFACT's role in new and future technologies. He concluded by explaining that the tools that are currently being used for publication will not be able to scale up as the content grows and called upon delegations to suggest alternative tools that might be available to support the technical work.

28. The Chair reported on Bureau meetings and decisions as well as representation of UN/CEFACT at conferences and other organizations. Key themes in his presentation were UN/CEFACT's strategy, consensus building and transparency in Bureau decisions and procedures. The Chair also emphasised the important role that the Secretariat plays in assisting in the dissemination of UN/CEFACT's work and the global nature of this representation activity, especially in light of the implementation of the WTO TFA. He also underlined that more than one third of the Bureau decisions taken since the twenty-first Plenary concerned projects and project development.

29. The Chair also reported to the Plenary on different expert meetings which had taken place since the twenty-first Plenary, including meetings with individual delegations. He announced that the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT Forum would take place in Geneva during the week of 25 April, immediately following the Plenary, and the twenty-eighth Forum would be held in Bangkok in September 2016 and be hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

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<sup>1</sup> Standard messages (e-CERT, e-CROP, Animal identification and e-Animal passport, Dispatch advice, Track and Trace, etc.), Coding (Product, Location and Party identification), Certification.

<sup>2</sup> Core Component Technical Specification (CCTS), Extensible Markup Language (XML) Naming and Design Rules (NDR), Core Components Business Document Assembly (CCBDA).

30. The Chair stressed the importance of the UNECE's online collaboration tool, the UN/CEFACT Collaboration Environment, and commended the UNECE secretariat on the progress and thoroughness of the resulting tool. The secretariat provided a brief overview of its functioning and modules.

31. The delegation of Germany inquired about the nature of UN/CEFACT's participation in the European Union (EU) Multi-stakeholder Forum for eInvoicing. The Vice Chair responsible for Liaison explained that UN/CEFACT has been invited to provide information when requested and has an observer role in the EU meetings, such as contributing to a background paper which was recently accepted by that body.

32. The Plenary took note of the Bureau overview of recent developments and requested that the Bureau report on developments again in 2017 (**Decision 16-04**).

## **VI. Reports of Rapporteurs (Agenda Item 5)**

33. The Rapporteur for Africa presented his report on activities since the last session (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/4) and the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific also presented his report (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/5).

34. The Chair commended the Rapporteurs for their continued support to expand the outreach of UN/CEFACT through the promotion of its work and outputs in the African and the Asia-Pacific regions and invited them to further develop synergies and cooperation among the regions.

35. The Plenary took note of the reports of the Rapporteurs for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific and requested that they provide reports again in 2017 (**Decision 16-05**).

## **VII. Activities of other UNECE bodies and international organizations of interest to UN/CEFACT (Agenda Item 6)**

36. Delegates were briefed on work relevant to UN/CEFACT by representatives from the following United Nations bodies: UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6), UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7), UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), ITC, and UNCTAD. These representatives highlighted the good, ongoing cooperation with UN/CEFACT and mentioned potential areas for future collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

37. The delegation of the United States asked how the organizations invited to speak under this item were selected. The secretariat explained that this is consistent with normal procedure within the United Nations, where other United Nations bodies report on their activities.

## **VIII. UN/CEFACT recommendations and standards (Agenda Item 7)**

38. The Chair provided a brief overview of the different recommendations and standards to be considered by the Plenary. The Chair indicated that the informal document containing the draft Recommendation on Public-Private Partnerships in Trade Facilitation (PPP-TF) (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/INF.1) was being presented for information instead of

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<sup>3</sup> The presentations are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40403>

decision, as had been initially planned, due to additional substantive comments received after the public review from the UNECE secretariat in charge of PPPs. He explained the reason and the continued willingness of UN/CEFACT to ensure the most pertinent and robust deliverables as possible. The draft Recommendation on PPP-TF would be submitted once again to the public review process before it would be submitted to Heads of Delegation for intersessional approval.

39. The Plenary noted the draft Recommendation and approved the request to submit the Recommendation on PPP-TF for inter-sessional approval (**Decision 16-06**).

40. The secretariat announced that, since the last Plenary, and according to agreed procedures, it had issued versions D15.A and D15.B of UN/EDIFACT, releases 2015-1 and 2015-2 of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) standard, versions D15.A and D15.B of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library (CCL), Versions D15.A and D15.B of the UN/CEFACT XML Schema Library, and Revisions 11 and 12 of the code list of the Codes for Units of Measure Used in International Trade (Recommendation 20, revisions 11 and 12 of the code list).

41. The Plenary took note of the updated standards presented by the secretariat and requested that they continue to be updated on a regular basis (**Decision 16-07**).

42. An example of a new type of deliverable, Executive Guides, was presented to the Plenary (document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/7). The Swedish delegation recognized the importance of such guides and went on to suggest linking them with the deliverables. The Bureau took note of this suggestion.

43. The Plenary noted the example of an Executive Guide and welcomed the development of Executive Guides for other UN/CEFACT deliverables (**Decision 16-08**).

44. The secretariat reported on the results of the 2015 UN/LOCODE Conference and the programme for the upcoming Conference (28 April 2016). A key outcome of the 2015 Conference was the draft terms of reference for UN/LOCODE Focal Points (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/16). The secretariat encouraged countries that have not yet done so to nominate National Focal Points for UN/LOCODE.

45. The Plenary took note of the report and requested that the secretariat report on the second UN/LOCODE Conference that will be held during the 2016 UN/CEFACT Forum in 2017 (**Decision 16-09**).

## **IX. UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference, and procedures (Agenda Item 8)**

46. The secretariat presented for approval the “Election Procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/10). The document outlines the election procedure of the UN/CEFACT Bureau, as agreed by the Plenary at its twenty-first session (Plenary Decision 15-06) and incorporating comments received.

47. The Plenary approved the document with minor modifications as reflected in the revised document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/10/Rev.1, with the understanding that this document will enter into force as of the new election in 2017, without retroactive application (**Decision 16-10**).

48. The UN/CEFACT Bureau presented seven other documents aimed at clarifying and streamlining internal procedures and increasing the visibility of UN/CEFACT and its work: “Executive Guides on UN/CEFACT deliverables” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/11); “Terms of Reference for the Project Review and Support Function” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/12); “Terms of Reference for Domains and Domain

Coordinators” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/13); “Terms of Reference for Liaison with Other Organizations” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/14); “Terms of Reference for the UN/CEFACT Communication Team” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/15); “Terms of Reference for the UN/LOCODE Focal Points” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/16); and “Update to the Open Development Process” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/17). A minor modification was requested to document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/13; this is reflected in the revised document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/13/Rev.1.

49. In relation to document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/17, the delegation of Japan suggested that the definition of the deliverables in paragraph 16 could be clarified. The Vice Chair responsible for the Methodology and Technology PDA will draft an information note to be discussed with interested delegations. This could be annexed to the document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/17 when a future revision is undertaken.

50. The Plenary noted the documents presented and requested that the Bureau continue to develop and revise terms of reference, when necessary, in order to further clarify and streamline its procedures and to increase the visibility of UN/CEFACT and its work (**Decision 16-11**).

51. The final version of the document, “UN/CEFACT Country Heads of Delegation: Guidance on responsibilities” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2011/7/Add.1/Rev.2), was approved by the Plenary at its seventeenth session (Decision 11-11) and was presented for information.

## **X. Future challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business (Agenda Item 9)**

52. The secretariat presented its recent publication entitled “UN/CEFACT and the SDGs: Harnessing the potential of trade facilitation and e-business for sustainable development” (ECE/INF/2015/17), “Briefing note on the contribution of UN/CEFACT to UN Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/18) and “Background paper: facilitating trade to feed the world” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/19). It emphasized the importance of relating UN/CEFACT deliverables to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

53. The Plenary noted the documents presented and requested that the Secretariat continue to analyse the contribution of UN/CEFACT to the Sustainable Development Goals and related issues (e.g. Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development) (**Decision 16-12**).

54. The Chair presented internal challenges within UN/CEFACT, namely attracting experts and communications. With regard to the former point, the secretariat suggested preparing guidance on how to initiate projects in UN/CEFACT. The delegation of the United Kingdom expressed its support for the communication efforts made by the secretariat and the Bureau.

## **XI. UN/CEFACT Prospective Directions (Agenda Item 10)**

55. The Bureau Chair presented for approval UN/CEFACT Prospective Directions (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20). This document provides a strategic framework of key activities in support of the mandate of UN/CEFACT and is intended to replace “A strategic Framework for UN/CEFACT activities” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2015/7). It is consistent with the streamlined project-oriented management approach adopted at the

eighteenth session of the Plenary in February 2012 and the associated revised foundation document, “UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.5).

56. The delegation of the Netherlands requested clarification on the term “semantic hub” in paragraph 7 of the document. The definition provided was, “a central nexus that connects multiple nodes”. In this context, it refers to UN/CEFACT deliverables allowing the interlinking of all data across the supply chain. An important element of this is ensuring that deliverables developed within UN/CEFACT use UN/CEFACT semantics, as well as reaching out to other organizations for collaboration.

57. The Chair reminded the Plenary that within the Memorandum of Understanding on electronic business between the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), ISO, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNECE, UN/CEFACT is identified as being the centre for semantics.

58. The delegation of Germany presented an informal document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/INF 3), in which it commended the development of contextualized reference models in UN/CEFACT and supported the strengthening of UN/CEFACT’s position as a semantic hub for electronic messages. The delegation also requested that UN/CEFACT continue to work and report on this and clearly reflect this activity in its future Programme of Work.

59. The Plenary agreed to include the development of contextualized reference models in UN/CEFACT’s Programme of Work for 2017-2018 (**Decision 16-13**).

60. The Plenary approved the UN/CEFACT Prospective Directions with minor modifications as reflected in the revised document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1 (**Decision 16-14**).

61. The Plenary also had before it the UN/CEFACT Programme of Work 2015-2016 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2015/8) for information. The Plenary requested the submission of the 2017-2018 Programme of Work to the Plenary in 2017 (**Decision 16-15**).

## **XII. Other business (Agenda Item 11)**

62. The delegation of China gave an update on its recent national trade facilitation efforts. The country ratified the WTO TFA in 2015 and established a National Trade Facilitation Committee in March 2016. A set of national standards which adopt UN/CEFACT standards has also been issued. The China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) has undertaken extensive work on harmonization and the local adaptation of standards.

63. The secretariat expressed its gratitude to the CNIS, particularly for the translation of ECE standards and deliverables into Chinese. It further proposed that, if the Chinese delegation so wished, these documents could be put on the UN/CEFACT website as informal translations for further dissemination and to encourage international harmonization. This offer was also extended to all other national delegations who might have translated UN/CEFACT deliverables into national languages and who would like to have them available on the UNECE website.

64. The Plenary requested that the Bureau, in coordination with the secretariat, request information from member States and international organizations in order to develop a report on how UN/CEFACT deliverables are being used for its next session (**Decision 16-16**).

**XIII. Adoption of decisions and report of the twenty-second session  
(Agenda Item 12)**

65. The Plenary adopted the decisions made and the report of the twenty-second session  
(Decision 16-17).

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