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**Tenth International Seminar on Trade and Transport Facilitation
Multimodal Transport Data Exchange Along Electronic Corridors and Trade Facilitation**

(1200 words, 10 min)

Online seminar, Ukraine, Odessa, 27-29 April 2020

**Statement of Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk,
Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE**

Dear Mr. Platonov, Mr. Petrov, Ms. Probert, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this tenth anniversary UNECE Odessa seminar on trade facilitation and the Single Window. Unfortunately, the COVID19 pandemic is preventing us from organizing this seminar physically in the beautiful city of Odessa, where we could once again feel the hospitality and entrepreneurial spirit of our hosts. Yet we are not giving up and together with our Ukrainian hosts we will carry it out during three consecutive mornings.

And I would like to thank you for that:

1. I would like to thank the hosts, who are key supporters of UN/CEFACT (and UNECE) in Ukraine.
 - a. Mr. Platonov, Head of Delegation of Ukraine to UN/CEFACT, First Vice-President of ICC Ukraine
 - b. Mr. Fedorov, Director General, LLC "PPL 33-3"
 - c. Mr. Ivan Petrov, Senior Vice President, FIATA
2. I would like to thank their team for organizing the logistics;
3. And the speakers for preparing their presentations and for being prepared to share their knowledge in this online virtual format. I am particularly pleased to have with us today Ms. Sue Probert, the Chair of UN/CEFACT.
4. And, finally I would also like to thank all participants for their interest and time dedicated to the topics of this seminar. I learnt that we have some 150 connections/registrations for these three mornings. And participants from several countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Lithuania, in addition to Ukraine.

I truly believe it's worth the time we are spending to organize and join the seminar. There are several reasons for this.

1. First, Odessa seminars on trade facilitation have almost become a regular activity. In fact, today's seminar is a follow up on the work and successes during the past 10 years. Building on 10 years of work today we embark on a new and highly topical topic: the harmonization and standardization of data in a set of transport documents to allow seamless exchange of data among modes of transport and documents in digital multimodal corridors.

2. Second, dematerialization – the move from paper-based processes to digital process is really important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: right now – in the pandemic; and subsequently, in the aftermath of the pandemic.
 - a. Right now, dematerialization can help reduce the person-to-person contacts in the international trade and transport operations. Avoiding contact, social distancing – are the key words of our lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will have to reduce person to person interaction in the supply chain, in the exchange of information and subsequent controls. And in fact the Odessa Port Community System already allows for exactly that. It allows truck drivers to pass procedures in the port without leaving their cabin or handing out documents. You have been pioneering on a very timely issues. Congratulations.
 - b. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the immediate health crisis, when we hopefully embark on an economic recovery. Harmonization and standardization of data in a set of transport documents to allow seamless exchange across multi-modal transport links can also play a key role for the economic recovery. Trade facilitation speeds up the movement of goods and economic activity and can help us nurture the much needed economic recovery after today's crisis. With a view to pursuing our joint objective, the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

In sum, we should not give up on trade facilitation at these difficult times. Just the opposite. We should embrace it.

At UNECE we have embraced trade facilitation and so have you.

During their 10-year history, the annual UNECE Odessa seminars have been associated with at least three success stories to which we in UNECE have contributed:

1. The establishment of the Port Community System in Odessa, operated by the PPL 33-35 company named after UN/CEFACT's Single Window recommendations 33, 34, and 35;
2. The establishment of the National Working Group on Trade Facilitation and Logistics, the predecessor of the Ukrainian National Trade Facilitation Committee; and
3. The trade facilitation readiness assessment and work on implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Ukraine.

The last three seminars also covered issues related to the facilitation of agricultural exports, including a Business Process Analysis of the exports of wheat from Ukraine.

At this year's seminar, the focus will be on facilitating the exchange of electronic data in several documents in different transport modes. And in so doing, we will focus on the use of UN/CEFACT standards, reference data models, and schemas in this regard.

This is meant to reinforce the work on trade facilitation along corridors, of which Odessa is a natural crossing point. This work started at the seminar in May 2019, and now the plan is to strengthen this work.

Let us work together

- to help business use the UN/CEFACT tools (such as standard schemas and business requirement specifications),
- so that service providers develop documents and data exchange along digital corridors (such as the Black Sea - Baltic Sea, GUAM or the Eurasian digital corridors).

Today, we have representatives of several initiatives for digital corridors and of the railway community with us (Mr. Evtimov, Deputy Secretary General, International Rail Transport

Committee (CIT)). Let us discuss how to use the UN/CEFACT standards as the basis for the needed data and documentary exchange. And let us look at very practical examples in this regard.

In this context, I also welcome the participation in this seminar of representatives of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Lithuania, in addition to Ukraine, as well as other countries and organizations, such as the International Port Community Systems Association (our long-term partner) and the International Rail Transport Committee.

With the mix of expertise and real-life practical applications across countries that we have here with us in this online seminar we are well placed to identify concrete next steps for the development of electronic multimodal corridors. And this will be a concrete step towards real life – on the ground impact of the many UN/CEFACT tools.

To close.

I am the new Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division. And I am proud of what UNECE and the Trade Facilitation Team has achieved in the past. And I very much hope that we can build on this past, and achieve even more – together with our partner countries.

I would have been delighted to come physically to your wonderful city. I have heard a lot of amazing things about Odessa. I very much hope that I will have the opportunity to do that at some point after the end of the crisis. If you have the enthusiasm to dedicate time for the organization of this seminar under these strained circumstances, I am sure we will be able to go on even more efficiently in the future.

UNECE is dedicated to this work on trade facilitation, Single Window, and data sharing among sectors and modes of transport, based on international standards. UNECE is advancing this at various fora. I am delighted that you have adopted such a pioneering approach on this issue at these seminars and in your overall work.

I sincerely wish you all success in your endeavours. I thank you for the attention, and I thank the UNECE Team, particularly Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Adviser, UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division for all his efforts and dedication in making this happen.