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Matters arising since the twenty-second session and other international developments

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The secretariat will report on matters arising since the twenty-second 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.

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I. International developments

A. eTrade for All Joint Declaration

1. UNCTAD is in the process of launching a multi-stakeholder initiative with 22 international organizations called “eTrade for All”. Its objective is to support effective cooperation by effectively harnessing each organization’s comparative advantages, creating synergies and delivering coordinated assistance to beneficiary countries in the area of international electronic commerce.

2. This initiative is being formalized through a joint declaration and the official launch will take place in the first half of 2017. Participation will not involve any additional resources, other than attending coordination meetings and informing the Initiative on UNECE’s relevant activities. This will provide direct benefits by enhancing coordination and the ability to respond in an effective and efficient way to countries’ requests for support, in line with respective mandates and expertise, while preventing duplication of efforts. It will also support the dissemination and uptake of UNECE’s recommendations, standards and tools through the work of other organizations.

B. World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement

3. 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 of the UNECE and UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools developed over the past 50 years. It also provides a powerful boost to the political will to implement these measures and to the ability of developing countries to obtain technical assistance for their implementation.

4. As of 22 January 2017, 107 countries had ratified the Agreement. A total of 110 countries (two-thirds of WTO Members) need to ratify the Agreement for it to enter into force.

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

- Recommendation n°1 on the UN Layout Key;
- Revised UNECE Recommendation n°4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies;
- Recommendation n°18 on Facilitation Measures related to International Trade Procedures;
- UNECE Recommendations n°33 to n°36 on Single Window;
- UNECE Recommendation n°40 on Consultation Approaches; and
- Standards that can support implementation such as the Core Components Library (UN/CCL), UN/EDIFACT (for electronic data interchange), Code Lists and various Business Requirement Standards (BRS) and Requirements Specification Mappings (RSM).

6. In addition, the UNECE secretariat has been active in supporting the implementation of the Agreement. Specific activities have included:

- UNECE support to WTO advanced courses on Trade Facilitation for National Committee Chairs (6 to 10 June 2016 and 28 November to 9 December 2016 in

English, 30 January to 10 February 2017 in French, 20 to 31 March 2017 in Spanish). These courses brought together Chairs and other key members of National Trade Facilitation Bodies to provide them with practical skills and an opportunity to share good practices and experiences. Participants also prepared action plans for establishing or strengthening their national trade facilitation bodies.

- UNECE's active role in the meetings of the Annex D+ Organizations¹ organized by the WTO to coordinate the efforts of international organizations to support to the WTO TFA implementation.
- UNECE's collaboration in the organisation of the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP)² Annual Forum in Shanghai in June 2016 - "Inclusive participation for effective Trade Facilitation Reforms" (<http://www.unece.org/?id=39561>).
- UNECE acting as co-organiser of the GFP Steering Committee Meeting in Geneva on 19-20 January, 2017.
- Participation in international workshops and meetings to demonstrate the role of UN/CEFACT in supporting the Agreement (see Section III below).

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

8. To this end, UNECE will continue to work closely with its partners, and especially the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), to develop and deliver joint products and support services. This will include the continued delivery of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) under a joint banner, as a UN tool, which will incorporate tools and products from other UN agencies

9. UNECE is also preparing an MoU with the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT) and the two bodies are working together to explore ways of assisting developing economies to increase the efficiency and thus enhance their competitiveness and economic development potential.

C. UN Sustainable Development Goals

10. On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - adopted by world leaders in September 2015 -

¹ On 1 August 2004, the WTO General Council adopted a Decision on the Doha Agenda work programme. Annex D to that Decision relates to the Modalities for negotiations on trade facilitation. Those Modalities recognize the importance of technical assistance and capacity building support for developing and least-developed countries to enable them to fully participate in and benefit from the negotiations. In order to make technical assistance and capacity building more effective and operational and to ensure better coherence, certain relevant international organizations have been invited to undertake a collaborative effort in this regard. The international organizations concerned are referred to as the "Annex D+ Organizations". At present the Annex D + group is comprised of the following organizations: IMF, ITC, OECD, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNIDO, WEF, WB, WCO.

² 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

officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind (A/RES/70/1).³ The SDGs will be a key reference point for all development actions and, particularly, those undertaken by the United Nations over the coming years, including UN/CEFACT.

11. The SDGs put significant emphasis on the role that trade can play in promoting sustainable development and the work of UN/CEFACT can directly contribute to the achievement of several SDG targets, including: SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; 10 on reduced inequalities; 12 on responsible production and consumption; 13 on climate action; 14 on life below water; 15 on life on land; and 17 on partnerships for the goals.

12. UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools make it simpler, faster and cheaper to trade between countries, thus contributing to growth, productivity and employment. Electronic tools like Single Window and paperless trade systems promoted by UN/CEFACT make it easier for companies to trade, while reducing the need for paper documents and increasing Government revenue collection, which directly contributes to SDG 8.

13. The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources is an essential element in promoting sustainable development. Amid growing concerns about the grave problem of overcapacity in and overfishing by today's modern fishing fleets, which is addressed by SDG 14, UN/CEFACT is working towards the establishment of a Team of Specialists for the promotion of sustainable fishery standards on a global scale, and on a project for the electronic exchange of fisheries data.

14. Governments and trade are increasingly looking to traceability standards to confirm that the production, transport and distribution of goods and services is in conformity with high-level policy objectives and civil society values, which directly relate to SDG 12. The UN/CEFACT agriculture expert group has already developed an international technical standard to trace important business processes in the animal and fish supply chain. UN/CEFACT is now working on a traceability framework to provide a structured approach to help stakeholders to describe and discuss the major functional components of a traceability solution, which – in a later step - can be technically implemented.

15. In the margins of the UN/CEFACT Forum in Bangkok, UNECE arranged a workshop to present its upcoming Recommendation on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Trade Facilitation. People-first PPs can make a major contribution to SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. While there has been a large body of guidance on PPPs in infrastructure generally, to date, little substantive work has been produced on PPPs in the domain of Trade Facilitation specifically. This workshop highlighted how PPPs can contribute to Trade Facilitation, including in non-traditional areas, such as a Single Window system, a National Trade Facilitation Body, infrastructure support for port communities, trade and transit corridors, and coordinated border management (www.unece.org/tradewelcome/trademeetings/trade-workshops/workshops/2016/workshop-on-people-first-public-private-partnerships-ppps/doc.html#) .

16. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has developed an electronic version of its trade declaration using the Core Component Library of UN/CEFACT and generating an XML message according to the specifications of UN/CEFACT. CITES is an international agreement aiming at ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their

³ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

survival. The CITES declaration is used in customs clearance procedures in all countries around the globe. It allows countries to control the trade in certain environmentally sensitive commodities and endangered species, and to combat illegal trade, which contribute to the achievement of specific targets under SDG 15.

17. UNECE is also seeking to support SDG 5 on gender equality through its project on women and trade facilitation. The UNECE Secretariat produced a background paper, which will form the basis of the drafting of a white paper by a UN/CEFACT project team. This may in the future lead to a separate project to develop a recommendation.

II. Outreach and support services

18. UNECE supported a project entitled “Improved capacity of governmental trade control agencies in Albania to implement Single Window”, implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Entrepreneurship of Albania, the Albanian Customs Administration, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of governmental trade control agencies and the business community in Albania to simplify, harmonise and automate trade information gathering and customs operations through a Single Window.

19. A workshop was held under this project in Tirana from 13 to 17 June 2016, where officers from the Albanian Customs Administration, State agencies, and the private sector were trained by experts from the UN/CEFACT, UNECE and UNCTAD on the development of a Single Window in the country.⁴ The workshop focused on international best practice and standards, and emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement. Key outcomes of the workshop were:

- Increased knowledge of relevant international recommendations, standards and tools (e.g. UNECE recommendations related to Single Window, United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, Business Process Analysis, the ASYCUDA Customs system, etc.);
- Improved understanding of existing customs procedures through a technical visit to a port;
- Draft outline of a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap in relation to Single Window establishment; and
- Draft terms of reference for a working group for the establishment of a Single Window.

20. In 2015 UNECE carried out a trade needs assessment in Kyrgyzstan. To improve transparency and facilitate trade, the assessment recommended the establishment of “training facilities, equipped with trained staff and training material adapted to the local context, within relevant market support institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in order to familiarise traders with emerging trends in supply chain management marketing, outsourcing and financial management”. In 2016 the Trade Facilitation Section in cooperation with Working Party 6 on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies, has launched a project aimed at developing training materials and conducting a series training workshops for trade support institutions in order to familiarize traders and government officials with international and national trade-related regulations, policies, trends and issues. The project is to be completed by 2018.

⁴ <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/trademeetings/trade-workshops/workshops/2016/workshop-on-establishing-an-albanian-single-window/doc.html#/>

A. Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide

21. The UN Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) is a web-based interactive knowledge management and training tool that supports countries in the implementation of trade facilitation reform. It helps public and private sector actors to better navigate the wide array of existing trade facilitation instruments in order to identify possible paths for achieving their objectives. 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 as well as training material and country case stories sharing best practices and solutions to support trade facilitation. The Guide is currently available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It is a key tool to support the implementation of the WTO TFA.

22. In order to complement the Guide, during 2016 a TFIG-Training Manual was released. The manual was developed to support the implementation of workshops based on the contents of the Guide. It provides Guidelines, tools and learning activities for three-day workshops on the Guide. In addition, it helps trainers to prepare for their sessions, shows them how to structure the training, and gives pedagogical and didactic Guidelines for achieving the participant's learning objectives.

23. With the support of the Swedish Government (the original sponsor of the project), the secretariat undertook a major review of TFIG. This included a complete update of all material from key organizations in the Guide and 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) which were added to the Guide during 2016.

24. With reference to the above, two two-day training workshops and one one-day executive training workshop were delivered in Accra, Ghana from 19-23 September 2016. Gathering participants from the government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, including the Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders, Ghana Union of Traders' Association, Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Ghana Industries, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority and National Security in Accra

25. TFIG has become a major reference resource for government officials and traders around the world. At the same time, it is a core tool for Trade Facilitation planning and training. Since its launch in September 2012, use of the Guide has grown exponentially. In 2015, TFIG received over 6.7 million hits and over 302,000 visits. In the first semester of 2016 alone, it received over 5 million hits and 211,310 visits and, by the end of 2016, the TFIG platform received over 10,5 million hits and over 445,000 visits.

26. UNECE is currently raising funds for maintaining and enhancing the TFIG by: developing additional domains, itineraries and sections; establishing this tool as the central portal for information on trade facilitation in support of the implementation of the WTO TFA, thus facilitating coordination among key players on Trade Facilitation; and including in the TFIG a One UN inquiry point on trade facilitation for countries. A project proposal has been developed to this end for submission to be submitted to potential interested donors.

B. Regional advisory services in 2016-2017

27. The Regional Adviser continued to manage projects and activities supporting countries efforts to implement UNECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations and Standards.

28. In the light of the pending entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), a number of advisory and training activities were organized with a view to assist transition economies in implementing trade facilitation measures, and notably the measures in the TFA. An assessment of the readiness of Kazakhstan to implement the TFA was finalized in early 2016, and on 1 March 2016 Kazakhstan notified the WTO secretariat on the measures which it was ready to implement the day of entry into force of the Agreement. The basis for this notification was the report prepared with support from UNECE and UNCTAD and with technical assistance (financing) from GIZ. This was followed up by a seminar on 10-11 November 2016 in Astana, during which the notification of category B measures (measures for which Kazakhstan would need additional time) and of category C measures (for which it would need both more time and international assistance) were discussed. The seminar also supported the establishment of a national trade facilitation committee in Kazakhstan.

29. UNECE continued providing support to Ukraine on the basis of the WTO TFA readiness assessment finalized in 2015. In particular, UNECE continued assisting in the improvement of the functioning of the Port Community System in Odessa, a maritime Single Window, and a national regulatory Single Window – the third and final objective of the collaboration project with Ukraine initiated in 2010. A seminar on step-by-step implementation of the Single Window and Data Harmonization, in October 2016, launched technical assistance activities for data harmonization and alignment with international trade facilitation and data exchange standards. A seminar on establishing and operating a national trade facilitation committee was organized together with UNCTAD, UK Customs, and WCO.

30. Following up on the Russian-funding project on trade facilitation and the Single Window for Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU),⁵ the Regional Adviser provided advisory services at two national workshops in support of the implementation of the Single Window reference model outlined under the project.

31. As a result of the Regional Advisory activities and projects in Ukraine and the Eurasian Economic Union, experts from the Eurasian Economic Commission and Ukraine continue to provide active support to the activities and projects of UNCEFACT.

32. The Regional Adviser continues to support the work on trade under the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA). During the past year, he organized the 10th meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Trade. In collaboration with the Government of Turkmenistan and the World Trade Organization, he also conducted a TRADE Policy Forum on the promotion of the international rules-based trading system in the SPECA subregion, which became a major event promoting subregional cooperation on WTO negotiations in Central Asia, and informing the government of Turkmenistan on the benefits and challenges of WTO accession. He collaborated with ESCAP and other UNECE staff in the organization of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum and Governing Council.

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

(a) Two training workshops based on the UN Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG): (1) for the SPECA countries in collaboration with the OSCE Border Management College in Dushanbe, in June 2016; and (2) in collaboration with USAID, the World Bank and CEFTA2006 in Belgrade in November 2016;

(b) Advisory missions in support of trade facilitation in transition economies;

⁵ Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation.

(c) Presentations on trade facilitation at a range of conferences including at the annual OSCE conference in Berlin in May 2016, and, together with the Director of the Trade and Economic Cooperation Division, at the International Single Window Conference in Marrakesh, in September 2016, as well as at other events.

(c) Presentations a

34. The Regional Advisor's capacity-building and advisory missions were organized in close cooperation with UNDP, UNCTAD, WTO, WCO, the European Commission, the Eurasian Economic Commission, GIZ, USAID, and others.

35. The Regional Adviser contributed to drafting two UNCEFACT deliverables: on the Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism Recommendation and the white paper on Single Window-related terminology.
