



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

from the

National Capacity-Building Seminar, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 29 March 2024

“Digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange using UN/CEFACT standards”

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), working with the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Investment, Industry, and Trade of Uzbekistan, organized a national capacity-building seminar on the use of UN/CEFACT standards to digitalize multimodal data and document exchange. This activity took place in response to the request of the delegation of Uzbekistan made by the Deputy Minister of Transport, Mr. Jasurbek Choriev, at the 18th session of the SPECA Governing Council on 23 November 2023 in Baku, to deliver capacity-building on the UN/CEFACT standards. The implementation of these standards is a substantive part of the “Roadmap for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor, using United Nations legal instruments and standards”¹ prepared with support from UNECE and adopted by the Presidents of the SPECA participating States at their Summit on 24 Nov. 2023 in Baku.

The problem that the Trans-Caspian digitalization Roadmap and UNECE seek to address is the **fragmentation** of efforts to digitalize parts of the transport and supply chain along the Trans-Caspian Corridor and elsewhere in the region. The digitalization of data and document exchange is characterized by (a) different and often unharmonized efforts in the different modes of transport (rail, road, inland water, sea or air); (b) different regulatory regimes (conventions), national or regional legislation; and (c) different technological synaxes. Historically, this fragmentation has been an important factor giving rise to the inefficiency of the Trans-Caspian (or Middle) trade and transport corridor.

The solution is not to offer ready-to-use, standard electronic document equivalents for consignment notes, bills of lading, and additional documents, but to **offer common semantic-layer standards**. In this sense, the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), which has a global remit in the UN to develop semantic standards in this area, is the best basis for solution. These standards are international public goods produced through a development process that is open to all UN member States and business stakeholders. They are a core element in the SPECA Trans-Caspian digitalization Roadmap, which explicitly mentions them as the semantic basis for information flows about goods transported along the corridor.,

The seminar built on the following objective and logic through an interactive discussion:

- Present the standards and methodology for their use as an international public good,
- Present the pilot implementation projects that have already started and discuss new ones,

¹ <https://unece.org/speca/speca-digitalization-roadmap>

- Discuss the way forward, notably:
 - o how can Governments help the practical implementation of the Trans-Caspian multimodal digitalization Roadmap,
 - o finalize the current and launch new pilot implementation projects,
 - o create centres of expertise, for IT and business experts working on digitalization to learn how to use the standards in a multimodal information exchange setting.

The workshop focused on keynote presentations by:

- the Chair of UN/CEFACT on the Centre's semantic standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model, how they are presented on the UN/CEFACT website², and how they are used in the implementation of the EU Regulation 2020/1056 on Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI)³. The UN/CEFACT Chair also presented the standards and artefacts for documents accompanying goods transported by the four modes of transport used in the Trans-Caspian corridor (consignment notes and bills of lading for road, rail, sea and air transport. She also presented the work of UN/CEFACT on aligning data exchange in the business/transport domain with the regulatory domain through the UN/CEFACT Cross-Border Management Reference Data Model.
- The Regional Adviser in the UNECE ECT Division presented the package of standards for digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange for digitalization of supply chain information exchange⁴ as well as the "Roadmap for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian corridor, using United Nations legal instruments and standards" and how the UN/CEFACT standards can be used to provide interoperability for seamless flow of multimodal data and document exchange in electronic format.
- The UNECE Regional Adviser, a TRACECA expert and UNECE's consultant on the project for digitalization of the railway consignment note presented the current work on the digitalization of a railway consignment note along the Trans-Caspian corridor. They presented the current stage of the pilot implementation project, prototype, and testing experience. They enquired about the interest of Uzbekistan to join the project.
- Several representatives of governmental and business entities in Uzbekistan presented the level of digitalization and adoption of the UN/CEFACT standards in the country:
 - o Mr. Jasurbek Choriyev, Deputy Minister of Transport of Uzbekistan, the main demander for this seminar, opened the event with a brief review of the state of play and needs for digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange in the country. He noted the need to include the air cargo information exchange. Uzbekistan airways use the IATA digital standards since 2008 and are planning to buy and use Cargo XML [which is aligned to the UN/CEFACT standards]. Tashkent Airport is developing a platform to exchange data with Customs.
 - o The Deputy Minister and a representative of the national road transport union noted that the private sector and government agencies in Uzbekistan are very much interested in using an electronic road consignment note (eCMR). It is very important to agree on the standards to be used. They are dealing with the issue of authentication

² <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/mainstandards>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020R1056>

⁴ <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/mainstandards> and <https://unttc.org/stream/electronic-trade-and-transport-documents-and-data>

of e-signatures to ensure acknowledgement and validation of electronically exchanged consignment notes. The participants in the seminar strongly requested from UNECE to support in advancing the digitalization of the road consignment note and collaborate with IRU and ICC on this issue. From 1 April 2024, Uzbekistan is launching an internal road consignment note.

- Mr. Elyor Khakimov, Uzbekistan Customs, (1) presented the experience of the successful data exchange using eTIR by air between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, and (2) noted that Uzbekistan has drafted a national roadmap in support of the implementation of the SPECA Trans-Caspian digitalization Roadmap, and Uzbekistan has formed 4 working groups for this implementation. He reported that the working groups are very much interested in the implementation of the UN/CEFACT standards and introduced several young specialists who are interested in the analysis of the readiness and deployment of the standards in Uzbekistan.
- A representative of Uzbekistan's railways reported that they exchange electronic information (the SMGS consignment note) with Kazakhstan in the UN/EDIFACT IFTMIN format. This information is most likely exchanged by Kazakhstan's railways further in the same format, if the goods are moving to the Russian Federation or China. Uzbekistan would be interested in joining the pilot digitalization project and testing.

The seminar identified that there are requirements from business and the government agencies to develop further multimodal digital exchange of data and documents in cross-border supply chains using the UN/CEFACT standards. Representatives from Customs, the Ministries of Transport and Investment, Industry, and Trade, clearly indicated the need to use UN/CEFACT standards in the implementation of the SPECA Trans-Caspian digitalization Roadmap.

From the interventions from various agencies in Uzbekistan, it became clear that there are technical skills in Uzbekistan involved in initial stages of digitalization of data and document exchange, and there is a necessity to build such skills for the implementation of the international standards for harmonized digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange.

The representatives of Customs, the national road transport carriers' association, railways, the Ministries of Transport and Investment, Industry, and Trade of Uzbekistan, as well as the German Technical Cooperation Agency GIZ, clearly supported the idea of establishing "centre(s) of expertise" in Uzbekistan, which would involve business and IT experts to learn more and practically implement the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and MMT RDM in digitalization projects for multimodal data and document exchange.

The participants clearly recognized the importance of using the global UN standards in the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange in Uzbekistan and the region and requested the following areas to be considered for follow-up activities:

1. Respond to the request of business representatives to intensify the cooperation on digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along supply chains, using the UN/CEFACT standards,
2. Increase efforts, including through the involvement of international development partners and other partners in the SPECA region, to build technical skills in Uzbekistan to

- implement the UN/CEFACT standards in a harmonized digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange; coordinate these efforts with the SPECA partners,
3. Together with Uzbekistan Customs, the national road transport carriers' association, railways, other modal transport agencies, the Ministries of Transport and Investment, Industry, and Trade of Uzbekistan, as well as the German Technical Cooperation Agency GIZ, work on establishing a centre of expertise (network of experts) knowledgeable of and working on the use of the UN/CEFACT standards in the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange. The best practice of building such expertise is through involvement in concrete pilot projects.
 4. Further explore possibilities to involve Uzbekistan railways and other relevant agencies in the project for digitalization of railway consignment notes aligned with the multimodal UN/CEFACT standards, led by TRACECA.
 5. Explore possibilities for other pilot projects, as requested by the local partners.
 6. Select a lead institution and focal points in Uzbekistan for the multimodal digitalization initiative.
 7. Request from the Government to present the SPECA Trans-Caspian digitalization Roadmap to relevant meetings with various development partners (the European Union, the World Bank and others) to support the use of UN standards for the harmonized digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange.
 8. Explore the possibility to carry out an assessment of the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and Multimodal Reference Data Model for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange in Uzbekistan and with its neighbours and partners.
 9. Explore the possibility to develop software for the digitalization of trade and transport documents accompanying goods (consignment notes, bills of lading and additional documents) to link to the Single Window in Uzbekistan.