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TRADE FACILITATION AND ELECTRONIC BUSINESS

Recent developments

Note by the secretariat for information

This document summarizes the activities of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) over the last 12 months. Additional information on the work of UN/CEFACT can be found on: <http://www.unece.org/cefact/>

1. Introduction

1. The 7th UN/CEFACT Forum was held from 26 to 30 September 2005 in Lyon, France. During this meeting, UN/CEFACT took the final steps to enable industry groups to create XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language)-based business documents for electronic trading. This will allow industry and business groups to develop United Nations XML business documents for use in electronic trading and other information exchanges. This development was made possible by the publication of the Core Components Library based on a stable methodology and maintained through an open and extensive consultative process. The Core Components Library holds a set of building blocks for the information to be exchanged by current and future electronic business systems and technologies. This will help to ensure the independence of information from the electronic systems that process it, thus securing for the future the large investment that organizations make in their information. The Forum was attended by over 200 experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

2. The 8th Forum was held in Vancouver, Canada, from 13 to 17 March 2006. The Forum worked on modelling complex business processes using the Unified Modelling Language (UML) and the UN/CEFACT Modelling methodology (UMM), as well as on several XML and business process specifications. Over 230 experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America attended the Forum. The next UN/CEFACT Forum meeting is scheduled from 2 to 6 October 2006 in New Delhi, India.

3. The 2006 Plenary session of UN/CEFACT will be held in Geneva from 22 to 24 May 2006. To make the Plenary more effective, the Bureau has structured the forthcoming session to give delegations greater opportunity to express their views. Three interactive "stakeholder" sessions are planned for countries, sectors and standards development organizations. The "countries" session will examine how the Centre's products and services could be strengthened, in the light of countries' priorities. The "sectors" session will look at how to create better and more efficient business practices and the session on "standards development organizations" will address: greater efficiency through using standards, interoperability, coordination and the division of tasks in order to avoid duplication. The results of the stakeholder sessions will be taken into consideration in building a single, integrated framework for UN/CEFACT.

2. Normative work

4. Since the 11th UN/CEFACT session in June 2005, the Centre has issued the following new or revised tools:

- (i) Core Component Library, Version 06A
- (ii) XML Naming and Design Rules (NDR) version 2.0
- (iii) UNeDocs WorkBase 0.5 ("Kuala Lumpur" Release)
- (iv) Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window
- (v) E-Certificate for agricultural commodities
- (vi) Recommendation 20, Revision 4 - Codes for Units of measure used in International Trade

- (vii) Recommendation 21, Revision 5 - Codes for Types of Cargo, Packages and Packaging Materials
- (viii) Recommendation 23, Revision 2 - Freight Cost Code

5. UN/CEFACT working groups processed over 145 Data Maintenance Requests to maintain the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) standard and update its directories, and released a Requirements Specifications Mapping, a tool to transform requirements formulated by business into technical specifications.

6. Two new working groups were formed under the International Trade and Business Processes Group (TBG) to undertake projects related to agriculture and e-Government. The group on agriculture (TBG18) will develop and maintain the relevant UN/CEFACT Business Process Models, Business Transaction Models, semantics and contents for the requirements of the agro-food communities in areas such as Phytosanitary e-Certificates and Animal Passports.

7. The group on e-Government (TBG19) will propose UN/CEFACT solutions for e-Procurement, legal archiving, exchanges between tax and social security agencies and information exchanges for law enforcement.

3. Implementation

8. Canada, France, Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China will commence verification tests on the UN/CEFACT Registry Implementation Requirements Specifications. UN/CEFACT deliverables such as the Core Component Library, Business Requirements Specifications, UN/CEFACT Schemas, UNECE Recommendations, and UN/CEFACT code lists will be kept in the registry for online access by users.

4. Capacity-building

9. Capacity-building activities under UN/CEFACT are presented in document ECE/TRADE/C/2006/15.

5. Communications and outreach

10. The UN/CEFACT Bureau launched an initiative to improve communications, productivity and participation by member States and non-governmental organizations in the work on trade facilitation and electronic business standards. As part of the exercise, a quarterly newsletter was launched for distribution to organizations participating in UN/CEFACT. The Bureau encourages feedback from all member States and, if requested, would be pleased to extend the circulation to Trade Committee delegations.

11. In response to the Plenary's request for member States to take a more active role in supporting and promoting the UN/CEFACT programme of work, the government of Sweden decided to fund the preparation of a "Guide to Trade Facilitation Implementation". The guide will be published before the end of 2006.

12. In July, the Bureau completed the text of the UN/CEFACT “Roadmap towards Paperless Trade”, which had been launched at the 3rd Executive Forum on Trade Facilitation, “Paperless Trade in International Supply Chains: Enhancing Efficiency and Security”. The Roadmap was submitted to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as one of the UNECE’s contributions.