



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRADE/2001/8
3 April 2001

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
Fifth session, 13-15 June 2001
Item 13 of the provisional agenda

COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Note by the secretariat

This document has been submitted to the Committee for information only.

Introduction

1. The Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED) and its subsidiary bodies enjoy ongoing cooperation with many other intergovernmental global bodies, both in and outside of the United Nations system. These include, notably, the European Union (EU), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods institutions. This cooperation is well structured and the division of work has been agreed upon. Where appropriate, active coordination is ensured in specific areas by inter-secretariat task forces. In addition, the Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) maintains very close relations with many international non-governmental organisations.

2. This report looks at the most important among the international organizations (whether inter-governmental or non-governmental) with which the Committee and its subsidiary bodies undertake substantive cooperation. It begins by summarising relations with the European Union, then looks at cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, other United Nations organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

3. It is worth noting that there are many organizations with whom we cooperate on a regular basis that are not included in this overview, simply because the inclusion of all such international organizations would have resulted in a prohibitively long document.

The European Union

4. The UN/ECE is a long-established forum for cooperation between European Union (EU) Member States and the other countries of Europe and North America. Because of its unique relationship *vis-a-vis* its Member States, the European Community also enjoys a unique status in all the committees of the UN/ECE. The European Commission and the UN/ECE secretariat maintain close and constructive relations, and many directorates-general contribute significantly to the Committee's work programme.

5. In strategic terms, the UN/ECE is a neutral inter-governmental forum within which the EU assists in defining and negotiating a wide range of legal instruments and also norms, standards and guidelines for best practices. These conventions, norms and standards constitute important tools for supporting the further integration of the European Community. The UN/ECE is an effective instrument for assisting the central and eastern Europe countries in completing the transition to market economies, and so contributes directly to the enlargement of the EU. Moreover, the increasingly active participation of Belarus, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other former Soviet countries in UN/ECE committees and activities helps to mitigate against the emergence of new economic divisions in Europe.

6. In many specific sectors, the European Commission bases its own work on outputs from the UN/ECE. Under the Committee this is most notable in the area of agricultural quality standards. In UN/ECE bodies, such as the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the European Commission and EU Member States join with other countries of the region to define working procedures for international business and trade.

7. The UN/ECE and the European Commission also work closely together in the Economic Dimension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The UN/ECE is also a partner in the Stability Pact for South-East Europe and actively supports regional groupings, especially those targeted to promoting economic development and political stability among countries with economies in transition.

Intergovernmental Organizations

Central European Initiative (CEI)

8. The Working Party on Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development has started collaboration with the Central European Initiative (CEI) on small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development and common initiatives in this area are being developed.

The CIS Interstate Council for Standardization, Certification and Metrology

9. The CIS Interstate Council for Standardization, Certification and Metrology has an informal agreement with the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) whereby it promotes and informs

its members of the work of WP.6. The Chair of the CIS Interstate Council is also the Vice-Chair of WP.6

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

10. The OECD has been emphasizing the importance of electronic commerce. In this context, it has initiated an action plan for global cooperation in electronic commerce and is keeping up-to-date a document describing all international efforts in this field. The UN/ECE has contributed to the development of this document and has participated in several high-level meetings on the theme of realizing the potential of global electronic commerce.

11. In agricultural standards, the OECD currently develops explanatory material (brochures) for the standards developed by the UN/ECE. There have been discussions about having this activity transferred to the UN/ECE, but member States have not made any decisions in this regard.

12. The UN/ECE and the OECD also cooperate closely in the area of industrial restructuring including in the work of the former ad hoc Group of Experts on Steel.

South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

13. The UN/ECE Secretariat fully supports the South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). In the case of the Committee, this includes secretariat support for its projects related to trade facilitation and arbitration. Significant assistance in the trade facilitation area has also been provided to countries participating in the Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA) which is jointly supported by the UN/ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

World Trade Organization (WTO)

14. The WTO has recently focused on trade facilitation, placing it as a topic on the agenda of its Council for Trade in Goods. The UN/ECE made a significant contribution to a seminar on trade facilitation organized by the WTO in 2000 and informal meetings have taken place between the secretariats of the UN/ECE and the WTO to ensure the full coordination of activities.

15. Indeed, the WTO does not have the intention of carrying out technical work in trade facilitation that might duplicate activities of other organizations. In this context, the UN/ECE has proposed a framework for cooperation among various international organizations. In this framework it has been suggested that WTO be responsible for filling gaps and that its central role should be to make recommendations, which have been developed by other organizations, binding under the WTO legal framework.

16. The UN/ECE secretariat participates in the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (CTBT) where the UN/ECE has observer status on behalf of all the UN regional commissions.

17. Representatives of the WTO secretariat regularly participate in the sessions of the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6). Most recently, the UN/ECE secretariat made a presentation and provided background information to the CTBT on the WP.6 project "International Model for

Technical Harmonization” and some of the comments made at the WTO were taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft text of the Model.

18. In addition, WTO members regularly participate in the work related to the enforcement of intellectual property rights under the Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice.

World Customs Organization (WCO)

19. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) benefits from close cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO). Official control measures are of crucial importance for traders and, in UN/CEFACT’s International Trade Procedures Working Group (ITPWG), the WCO has made substantive contributions to the development of several key Recommendations (Recommendation 27 on Pre-Shipment Inspection and Recommendation 18 on Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures). A representative of the WCO is a current member of the UN/CEFACT Steering Group. To reflect this close cooperation, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed between the UN/ECE and the WCO and it is expected that the heads of the two organizations will sign it in the near future.

United Nations organizations

Regional Commissions

20. The Trade Division actively seeks to share the information and experience gathered under the Committee and its subsidiary bodies with the other regional commissions of the United Nations. This policy has been particularly productive in the area of trade facilitation.

21. Together with the other regional commissions, the UN/ECE is exploring the possibilities of a more active policy with regard to the introduction and implementation of trade facilitation techniques and electronic commerce in the different regions. To that end, several expert group meetings and seminars have been carried out together in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). These efforts have led to an initiative to establish national trade facilitation bodies in the ESCWA member States.

22. The UN/ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) have also maintained an in-depth cooperation on various trade facilitation issues. For example, the commissions have jointly developed training guides on electronic data interchange, as well as holding joint seminars.

23. ESCAP and ESCWA have joined the UN/ECE to set-up up a joint web site for International Trade: <http://www.UNeTrades.net>. The Web site allows traders, free of charge, to download codes necessary for efficient trading. In addition, the UN/ECE and ESCAP cooperate through the SPECA (Special Programme for Central Asian Republics) programme, which includes elements on border-crossing facilitation as well as trade facilitation.

24. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has for many years participated in awareness-raising activities and disseminated UN/CEFACT information to a large number of parties implementing

trade facilitation measures in their region. Discussions have also taken place with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with regard to organizing either a seminar or training session in that region.

25. In the field of agricultural standards, cooperation has also been strengthened over the recent years, in particular with ESCWA and ECLAC, leading to the translation of UN/ECE standards into Arabic and Spanish.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

26. The relationship between the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, and, in particular, the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables has substantially intensified over the past two years. Consultations between the UN/ECE secretariat and the FAO secretariat have resulted in a highly productive working relationship. The FAO Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables takes UN/ECE standards as starting points for the development of standards; in addition, wherever possible, Codex standards are aligned with UN/ECE standards to avoid confusion in trade.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

27. The IAEA and the UN/ECE are co-sponsoring a publication called Guidelines on the Management of Radioactive Protection Aspects in the Recycling of Metal Scrap, which is being developed under the auspices of the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development.

International Trade Centre (ITC)

28. As one example of our cooperation with the ITC, during the June 2001 Forum on E-Services for Trade, Investment and Enterprise, the ITC has agreed to organize a half day, parallel workshop on, "Successful Services Exporting" with internationally recognized experts in this area. The ITC also fully participates in the UN/CEFACT, UNCTAD and ITC intersecretariat task force on trade facilitation.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

29. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) works closely with the Committee and its subsidiary bodies in all areas of work that touch upon trade law. For example, it actively participates in the UN/CEFACT Legal Working Group and the work on the revision of the 1961 European Convention on International Commercial Arbitration. In addition UNCITRAL has actively communicated with the UN/ECE in its activities related to the legal framework for public/private sector partnerships.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

30. All of the Committee's subsidiary bodies communicate on a regular basis with UNCTAD regarding their work. This communication is particularly regular and structured in the area of trade facilitation where UN/CEFACT, UNCTAD and ITC are all active. An inter-secretariat Task Force regularly meets to ensure continued coordination among the work programmes of these three organizations.

31. One of UNCTAD's main objectives is to encourage wider participation in international commerce. This involves putting special, but not exclusive, emphasis on improving the integration of developing countries and small and medium-sized enterprises into an open global trading environment. A core element of UNCTAD's trade efficiency initiative is the Trade Point programme, which promotes and implements many of the recommendations developed by UN/CEFACT.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

32. The Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development maintains close links with institutions and organisations involved in industrial re-structuring and business development. Together with UNEP and UNIDO, seminars have been organised on the clean up of chemical sites. The Team of Specialists is considering options with these agencies regarding future publication of the Compendium of Soil Clean-up Technologies and Soil Remediation.

World Bank

33. The World Bank actively participates in UN/CEFACT's International Trade Procedures Working Group (ITPWG) and has provided substantive inputs to Real Estate Advisory Group under the Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice. In addition, The UN/ECE is part of the World Bank's **Global Facilitation Partnership** which was set up to make sure that Trade Facilitation measures are used in international projects and the World Bank's **Global Corporate Governance Forum** which seeks to promote good practice in this area.

Non-Governmental Organizations

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

34. The UN/ECE has longstanding, fruitful cooperation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). UN/CEFACT has found this cooperation particularly useful. For example, in UN/CEFACT Recommendation No. 5, where the revised list of abbreviations of Incoterms is based on ICC Publication 560, Incoterms 2000. The International Trade Procedures Working Group of UN/CEFACT has cooperated with the ICC in the revision of Recommendation 18: *Facilitation Measures related to International Trade Procedures*, which is an umbrella recommendation for all other UN/CEFACT recommendations on trade facilitation. The Legal Working Group of

UN/CEFACT has also cooperated closely with the ICC on Recommendation No. 31 (the Electronic Commerce Agreement).

35. The ICC works with Governments and businesses to address key issues relating to the emergence of a global marketplace for electronic commerce and has large grounds for working together with UN/CEFACT on this.

36. In addition, the ICC works very closely with the Advisory Group on Intellectual Property Rights under the Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice (WP.5). In fact, the ICC manages a Trust Fund, to support the activities of this Advisory Group, as well as actively participating in its work.

37. The ICC being one of the most important international organizations representing the private sector, the UN/ECE secretariat has explored areas of interest and modalities for development of a Memorandum of Understanding in order to widen and deepen our cooperation. This initiative has met with a positive response and both organizations will continue work on the development of an MoU during the coming year. The common objectives of such an MoU, which will cover the complex activities of not just the Trade Division but also of all parts of the UN/ECE, will be to strengthen cooperation in the mutual promotion of recommendations and other products, to reduce any possible duplication of activities, and to initiate new projects of mutual interest.

European Electronic Messaging Association (EEMA)

38. The European Electronic Messaging Association (EEMA), has long-standing links with the UN/ECE. EEMA regularly participates in the work of the UN/CEFACT and both organizations are jointly dedicated to encouraging best practice in e-business. EEMA has provided assistance to the Committee for its 2000 and 2001 forums. EEMA particularly helped the UN/ECE to raise funds that have been mainly used to finance participation from CIS and eastern European countries and is also assisting the UN/ECE in identifying high quality speakers for promoting the forum.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

39. ISO participates in and regularly contributes to the work of UN/CEFACT and the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6).

40. In order to coordinate the work between the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC) and the UN/ECE, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was developed in 1994. Following the establishment of UN/CEFACT, it was agreed to review this MoU and a new version was approved in 2000, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International CALS Congress and NATO CALS as participating organizations. Regular consultative meetings between representatives of all these organizations take place in the context of this MoU and its implementation.

Science Park and Innovation Centre (SPICE)

41. In the field of business development and in particular business incubators, the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development cooperates with SPICE (Science Park and Innovation Centre).

Summary

42. Collaboration with other international organizations is an essential and particularly enriching part of the Committee's work. It guarantees consultation across a wide range of parties and interests; ensures that there is no duplication of work; and assists in promoting the norms, standards, recommendations and best practice guidelines that result from our joint efforts to promote trade, industry and enterprise development.

* * * * *