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## Executive Guides in Support of United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business Deliverables

### Submitted by the Bureau

*Summary*

In 2016, the 22$^{nd}$ Session of the Plenary endorsed the development of a new form of deliverable called an "executive guide" in order to better disseminate the work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) to high-level deciders and policymakers (Plenary decision 16-08, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/11). Since then, the Bureau has presented on average three executive guides per year. The current document contains the text of three further executive guides on the topics of: Trade Information Portals, the cross industry family of supply chain standards, and the transport and logistics standards in support of COVID-19 recovery.

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1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) develops e-business standards, technical specifications, and trade facilitation recommendations. The target audience for recommendations is high-level decision makers, so these documents are intended to be accessible and easily understood. The standards and specifications, on the other hand, target a more technical audience and are therefore, perhaps, not quite as accessible.

2. In 2016, the UN/CEFACT Bureau proposed the development of executive guides to translate, in a very brief format, these technical topics into a format that is more accessible to a larger, non-technical audience. This is part of an effort to communicate about UN/CEFACT standards on multiple levels, and specifically targets high-level decision makers. Since their inception, UN/CEFACT has created executive guides on fourteen topics:

- United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT);

- United Nations Core Component Library (UN/CCL) and United Nations Core Component Technical Specification (UN/CCTS);

- Small-Scaled Lodging House Information Process;

- E-invoicing / UN/CEFACT Cross Industry Invoice (CII);

- United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE);

- Electronic version of the UNECE *Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road* (E-CMR);

- Electronic version of the International Maritime Organization's *Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic* (IMO FAL);

- Reference Data Models (RDMs);

- Electronic commerce;

- Streamlining formalities and documentary requirements;

- Transboundary movement of waste;

- Enhancing quality of supply chain data;

- Smart containers; and

- Smart connectivity.

3. The current document proposes the text for three new executive guides:

- Trade Information Portals (Annex I);

- Cross industry family of supply chain standards (Annex II); and

- Transport and logistics standards in support of COVID-19 recovery (Annex III).

**Annex I: Executive Guide on Trade Information Portals**

## I. Introduction

1.      Traders require clear, reliable data to effectively move goods across borders. Any restrictions, regulatory processes, and duties or taxes need to be known in the negotiation phase of a transaction in order to integrate the related costs into the negotiated price. Transparency and predictability are cornerstones of the international trading system which can be achieved with a single portal where all this information can be accessed.

2.      Establishing a portal for this purpose requires a certain level of cooperation between government agencies as well as a harmonization of the data and the way it is presented and exchanged.  The additional, principle challenge is to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date.

3.      The publication and availability of such data is an integral part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), article 1 which is a binding requirement. Among others, the TFA outlines the type of information which has to be made accessible. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has developed a recommendation to detail how to implement such a portal, the key success factors, and the relationship (of this) with other trade facilitation measures, such as Single Window.

## II. Applications

4.      A Trade Information Portal (TIP) enables the publication and availability of information related to regulatory requirements and procedures for the importation, exportation, and transit of goods. A TIP should be an electronic system, accessible via the Internet. The main objective of a TIP is to create a trade facilitation tool to help the private sector understand regulations and trade agreements and to streamline their procedures.

## III. Benefits

5.      A TIP will provide the transparency and predictable information necessary for traders to plan their processes and resources for their cross-border operations. It will allow traders to prepare all necessary documentation and authorizations for the entry or exit of goods prior to their arrival at the border, and thus contribute to compliance and streamlined border crossing.

6.      A TIP can also contribute to cross-agency collaboration. The exchange and preparation of data linked to the information published on the portal can help agencies align their requirements as well as the standards they use to communicate the information.

## IV. More information

7.      UNECE Recommendation No. 38: Trade Information Portals (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/08)

## Annex II: Executive Guide on the Cross-Industry Family of Supply Chain Standards

### I.    Introduction

1.      The effort to move from paper to electronic processes is only optimized if all related processes are also dematerialized. To dematerialize only the invoice, for example, may provide facilitation for the stakeholders who need to access or reuse data from this document; however, if the other supply chain processes are not also electronic, the flow of information is broken and data will need to be rekeyed into systems, which may result in human errors.

2.      True optimization of dematerialization can only be achieved by considering each electronic exchange within the overall supply chain process, its relation to all the other exchanges, and how the data is reused from one process to the next. Information such as the product details or the trader details (i.e. buyer, seller) will be reused for a quotation request, a purchase order, an invoice, a packing list, and other processes.

3.      UN/CEFACT has developed a Buy-Ship-Pay model which outlines such relationships and puts each information exchange in the context of a global supply chain transaction. The "buy" part of this reference model corresponds with the commercial transactions between a buyer and seller and these are covered under the UN/CEFACT cross industry family of standards.

### II.    Applications

4.      The UN/CEFACT cross industry family of standards covers the commercial aspects of a transaction which include the following processes:



*Figure: Commercial processes covered by the UN/CEFACT cross industry family of standards*

5.      The standards are available free of charge on the UN/CEFACT webpages and are ready for use.

### III.    Benefits

6.      The UN/CEFACT cross industry family of supply chain standards is based on the overarching Buy-Ship-Pay model which allows further reuse of information and alignment of processes across the supply chain in transport/logistics and finance/payment. These processes can be used individually or combined for seamless reuse of information in each link of the supply chain. This provides optimization of digitalization by allowing all actors along the supply chain to more easily share information.

### IV.    More information

7.      See the deliverables under Supply Chain Management on the Streamlined Standards page of the UN/CEFACT website: https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/mainstandards.

## Annex III: Executive Guide on Transport and Logistics Standards in Support of COVID-19 Recovery

## I.   Introduction

1.      The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in several measures taken by countries, often in an uncoordinated manner. One constant has been the emphasis on reducing human contact to slow down the spread of the disease. In some cases, this has cumulated in the closure of borders.

2.      However, in today's economy, countries are increasingly interdependent and supply chains are very often global, which results in a need to allow goods to cross borders to meet consumer and national demands. The use of electronic data exchange can eliminate the need for paper documents and the human contact that this implies. It can also streamline border crossings as information can be shared prior to the arrival of merchandise.

## II.   Applications

3.      The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has developed a series of standards for transport and logistics processes which can contribute to making border crossing more efficient and potentially eliminate human contact. The verification of consignment notes, packing lists, transport contracts, status enquiries etc. can be achieved with standardized, electronic data exchange and without any human contact.

4.      These standards have been developed within UN/CEFACT and its predecessors since the 1980s. The United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) standards have been widely adopted by the transport and logistics industry and are still very common today. As UN/CEFACT has evolved with technologies, it has constantly maintained these vital standards while at the same time proposing other data exchange protocols, such as XML, which are based on the same business processes as UN/EDIFACT. This allows for a smooth transition between data exchange protocols without needing to rethink the underlying business requirements.

## III.   Benefits

5.      The UN/CEFACT transport and logistics standards are based on the overarching Buy-Ship-Pay model which allows further reuse of information and alignment of process across the supply chain with commercial processes and finance/payment processes. These processes can be used individually or combined for seamless reuse of information in each link of the supply chain. This provides optimization of digitalization by allowing all actors along the supply chain to more easily share information.

## IV.   More information

6.      See the deliverables under the Transport and Logistics on the Streamlined Standards page of the UN/CEFACT website: https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/mainstandards.

7.      See also the UN/EDIFACT directorieshttps://unece.org/uncefact/unedifact/2011-present.