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Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations

Report of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Location Advisory Group at its Fourth Annual Meeting

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Location (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group held its fourth annual meeting on 27 November 2020. The secretariat prepared a conference report detailing activities undertaken by the Group and decisions made at the meeting. The participants reviewed and agreed to this report.

The report provides a summary of the major activities conducted by the Group, the developments and the decisions related to UN/LOCODE, such as supporting the use of UN/LOCODE to identify the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) designated ports by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; the publication of the revised United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Recommendation No. 16; the UN/LOCODE maintenance and the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering project.

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I. Introduction and attendance

1. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group held its fourth annual meeting on 27 November 2020. Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face meeting could not be held as usual and the meeting was thus organized virtually. The meeting was attended by 36 delegates and experts representing national government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. The following United Nations Member States were represented: Bolivia, Brazil, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Guinea, Italy, Japan, Norway, and The United Arab Emirates. The following United Nations bodies and organizations participated in the meeting: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The International Maritime Organization (IMO), and The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector participated: The Bureau International des Containers (BIC), COSCO Shipping, DagangNet, Hapag-Lloyd, the Port Authority of Barcelona, Shipping Systems, Shipplanning Message Development Group (SMDG), and The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

II. Opening remarks

2. The Chief of the Trade Facilitation Section of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of UNECE opened the meeting by welcoming the representatives of the Group. She stressed that despite the special situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNECE secretariat had been able to manage UN/LOCODE activities with minimum disruption. COVID-19 significantly impacted the global supply chain and thus many stakeholders and governments are now turning to e-business solutions to make supply chains disaster resilient. Governments implement trade control procedures to minimize human contact and thus, it favours the implementation of e-business technologies. This increases the importance of UN/LOCODE, which is an essential component of every trade-and-transport-related message. She also expressed her appreciation for the developments achieved by the Group since the last annual meeting.

3. The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group highlighted the difficulties and challenges caused by COVID-19 on the activities of the Group. He reiterated the importance of UN/LOCODE by saying that UN/LOCODE is one of the building blocks on which our trading system rests. He expressed his gratitude to the UNECE secretariat and the Group for the major developments since the last annual meeting, including the following:

- The revised UNECE Recommendation No. 16¹, approved at the informal virtual consultation with members of the UN/CEFACT Plenary in May 2020;
- The progress of the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering project to develop the new UN/LOCODE system; and
- The publication of the UN/LOCODE releases with the support of the secretariat and contributions of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team.

III. Procedural

4. The agenda of the meeting was approved. (Decision 20-1)

¹ UNECE Recommendation No. 16: United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations is available at (<https://unece.org/trade/publications/recommendation-ndeg16-united-nations-code-trade-and-transport-locations>).

5. A tour-de-table was made for participants to introduce themselves. The main expectations of the participants were to keep up with UN/LOCODE developments and discuss the issues raised at the meeting.

IV. Report from the secretariat

6. The Secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group reported on the activities related to UN/LOCODE since the last annual meeting as follows:

- Enhancement of the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network: This network has been extended with new UN/LOCODE National Focal Points nominated by the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and reappointed by France, India and Morocco;
- Revision of UNECE Recommendation No. 16: Since the approval of the revised UNECE Recommendation No. 16 by the UN/CEFACT Plenary, the secretariat has implemented and published a repository of UN/LOCODE child codes on the UNECE website² as outlined in the revised Recommendation No. 16 which includes the following three examples of use cases:
 - BIC Container Facility Code;
 - IMO Port Facility Number; and
 - SMDG Master Terminals List.

As noted on the website, the use cases mentioned above do not engage the secretariat in any way and they do not constitute an endorsement of any kind.

- UN/LOCODE maintenance: The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team had planned to hold a face-to-face meeting during the UN/CEFACT Forum in April 2020, which was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team validated Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) via virtual meetings throughout 2020, implemented a robust maintenance procedure and contributed to high-quality UN/LOCODE releases 2019-2 and 2020-1; and
- UN/LOCODE Re-engineering project: With support from the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS), the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project Team engaged in developing the new UN/LOCODE system based on the Business Requirement Analysis Report approved at the third annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

V. Overview of new developments and follow-ups

7. The representative of the FAO presented a paper, jointly drafted with the UNECE secretariat, to propose the use of UN/LOCODE to identify the designated ports of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA). This agreement is an important instrument in combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

8. The paper proposes to assign UN/LOCODE to all ports designated by Parties to the agreement as control locations for PSMA. At present, the use of UN/LOCODE to designate a port is only optional. Due regard must be given to the formal procedure that makes UN/LOCODE a requirement when Parties designate a port. Finally, the representative of

² See <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/unlocode-child-code-repository>.

FAO mentioned the intention to use UN/LOCODE in the FAO Global Record Information System, which is another measure of combating IUU fishing.

9. Delegates and participants agreed to the proposal of including all PSMA-designated ports in UN/LOCODE and to support a tailored maintenance procedure to harmonize the maintenance of UN/LOCODEs assigned to those ports and the maintenance of the PSMA-designated ports in the FAO database. (Decision 20-2)

10. Delegates and participants asked the UNECE secretariat to continue to work with FAO to study the feasibility of using UN/LOCODE for the Global Record Information System and to present a study paper at the next annual meeting. (Decision 20-3)

11. The representative of the EMSA informed participants of their mandate, work, and plans to provide technical specifications, standards and procedures to develop a common location database for the European Maritime Single Window (EMSW) environment, based on the Central Location Database (CLD) used by the EMSA SafeSeaNet (SSN) applications. These systems extensively use UN/LOCODE in their day-to-day message exchanges.

12. In the discussion, the representative from IMO encouraged EMSA to become proactive in the harmonization of location codes beyond its own region to increase the safety of maritime traffic around the world.

13. Delegates and participants took note of the ESMA CLD and encouraged the secretariat to follow up on the work to establish the common location database for the EMSW environment and share its development at the next annual meeting. (Decision 20-4)

14. The Secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group briefed participants on the latest revision of ISO 3166. As one of six standing members in the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, UNECE votes in ballots to update code lists of ISO 3166, including ISO 3166-1 (country code) and ISO 3166-2 (subdivision code), used in UN/LOCODE. ISO TC46/WG2 is responsible for the normative text of the standard.

15. Two significant ballots related to ISO 3166 were approved in 2020:

- Edition 2020 of ISO 3166, including ISO 3166-1:2020, ISO 3166-2:2020 and ISO 3166-3:2020; and
- Revised Terms of Reference of the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency.

16. Delegates and participants took note of the involvement of the UNECE secretariat in the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency and ISO TC46/WG2 and encouraged their continued active involvement. (Decision 20-5)

17. The representative of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) presented their work. As a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNGEGN aims to encourage the creation of national names authorities and collect and facilitate the dissemination of work on place names standardization. The beta UNGEGN World Geographic Names Database or other UNGEGN-network databases can be used as a reference for location names.

18. Delegates and participants took note of the liaison between the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group and UNGEGN for the potential contribution of UNGEGN in standardizing location names in the UN/LOCODE directory. They encouraged the UNECE secretariat to strengthen the liaison and cooperation with UNGEGN. (Decision 20-6)

VI. UN/LOCODE maintenance

19. The Co-convenor of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team reported on the work of the UN/LOCODE maintenance. He summed up the challenges of validating Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) as follows:

- Absence of the official revised Recommendation No. 16;
- Lack of support from the UN/LOCODE National Focal Points, especially from the countries who have many DMRs;
- Lack of justifications from requesters; and
- Lack of an electronic maintenance system to support the DMR workflow.

20. He pointed out the following proposals to address the above challenges:

- Efficient interaction with the requesters, enabled by the new system (currently under development); and
- Termination of the processing of DMRs submitted by requesters or Focal Points who do not sufficiently participate in maintenance meetings.

21. He also raised the following issues for further discussion and decisions:

- Function “A” for Special Economic Zone (SEZ): Considering the area concept supported in the revised Recommendation No. 16, SEZ is a kind of trade facility in a city. Function “A” could be assigned to the city where the SEZ is located instead of assigning an individual UN/LOCODE to the SEZ;
- Far upstream inland water ports: Function “1” for seaports should be assigned to far upstream inland water ports where sea-going vessels call; and
- Accuracy of geocoordinates: In the UN/LOCODE directory, the accuracy of geocoordinates is to the minute. For small locations, rounding of geocoordinates up or down by a minute might locate a point outside of the actual area.

22. The other Co-convenor of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team presented his study paper on UN/LOCODE following Decision 19-10, made at the third annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. The paper aims to provide more guidance to the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team by sharing observations, understandings, and suggestions.

23. Delegates and participants expressed their sincere appreciation for the UN/LOCODE maintenance to:

- the secretariat for their dedicated support and coordination;
- the two co-convenors of the Maintenance Team for their excellent work;
- all UN/LOCODE Focal Points and experts who have contributed to the DMR validation work; and
- all DMR submitters who were present at the maintenance meetings to facilitate the DMR validation by justifying their requests. (Decision 20-7).

24. Delegates and participants agreed to the following guidance on the UN/LOCODE maintenance, especially to enhance general best practice in dealing with the area concept of UN/LOCODE and assignment of specific transport locations or trade facilities within an area with further guidance:

- The distinction between the area and the point concept continues to be problematic and practical solutions may be needed on a case-by-case basis;

- Despite hierarchical management of subdivisions specified in ISO 3166-2, only one level (mostly the highest level) of administrative subdivisions should be used by UN/LOCODE. If necessary, the UN/LOCODE National Focal Points may review this available subdivision list for their countries to check if the selected level is appropriate;
 - Any request to assign a UN/LOCODE to a subdivision specified in ISO 3166-2 should be rejected;
 - UN/LOCODE records the geocoordinates of the official centre of a location specified in an international gazetteer;
 - The accuracy of geocoordinates of a location remains to the minute. In cases where stakeholders need to locate a special facility in a location, such as a cargo's delivery destination, geocoordinates with more accuracy could be provided in the stakeholder's business system and not in UN/LOCODE. This issue may need to be addressed in a revision of Recommendation No. 16;
 - Before a UN/LOCODE is assigned to a location with only Function "3", the Maintenance Team should consider the feasibility of sharing a UN/LOCODE already assigned to its nearby area;
 - UN/LOCODE is not supposed to address disputes on the territory. The Maintenance Team might continue the current practice of applying the "first come, first served" policy;
 - The Maintenance Team may archive a DMR in the absence of requester justification, or validation of the UN/LOCODE National Focal Point, until a further request to process it is received; and
 - If a single function of a location is not active anymore, the Team will try to retain the UN/LOCODE entry by replacing the function with Function "0". If there is a need to release the UN/LOCODE, the team should be careful about such a deletion to minimize the negative impact on the business community. (Decision 20-8)
25. Delegates and participants decided to set up a task force within the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to study the issues related to SEZ and the feasibility of introducing a child code for SEZs. (Decision 20-9)
26. Delegates and participants proposed that the secretariat address disagreements in DMR validation by consulting with the UN/CEFACT Head of Delegation (HoD) for the country in question in the absence of its UN/LOCODE National Focal Point. (Decision 20-10)

VII. The UN/LOCODE Re-engineering project

27. The Co-Leader of the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project briefed participants on the progress of the project. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team could not hold face-to-face meetings in 2020. Despite the difficulties, the project team succeeded in developing a high-quality UN/LOCODE maintenance system based on the Business Requirement Analysis Report which was approved at the third annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. All modules have been completed as scheduled, including user registration, DMR submission, DMR validation, directory publication, etc.
28. As approved by the Steering Committee, user testing has been progressing within the testing environment hosted by UNECE and has been open to a group of experts identified by

the Maintenance Team for testing. The project team has addressed all comments received from the testers without any delay.

29. The Secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group demonstrated the main functions and features of the newly developed UN/LOCODE system. She also presented a roadmap for the deployment of the new system for a smooth transfer from the current system to the new one.

30. The representative from IMO presented the UN/LOCODE Application Programming Interface (API) Specification, use cases, and pilot implementation of the API to facilitate data synchronization between the new UN/LOCODE system and the IMO Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS). Because of the cancellation of the UN/CEFACT Forum in April 2020, IMO was not able to present the API specification as decided at the last annual meeting. The secretariat organized an online meeting to discuss it with UN/CEFACT experts, especially the leader of two UN/CEFACT projects (RDM2API³ and API Town Plan). Delegates and participants supported the work undertaken for the API development.

31. Delegates and participants endorsed the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) in providing resources in kind to support the secretariat in re-engineering the UN/LOCODE system and minimum five-year maintenance. This new system is owned by UNECE and will be hosted in the United Nations ICT environment. (Decision 20-11)

32. Delegates and participants agreed to the following:

- Considering the smooth transfer between the current system and the new system, the current system will be shut down on 1 April 2021, after the cut-off date of UN/LOCODE release 2021-1. DMRs submitted to the current system will be processed for release 2021-1 using the current system;
- The new system will be launched in February 2021 for users to submit DMRs, but those DMRs will be only validated for release 2021-2 in the new system. Release 2021-1 will be generated in the current system while release 2021-2 will be generated in the new system;
- The legacy data migration, wrap-up of the project and training session for the new system are scheduled for the first quarter of 2021; and
- The stakeholders will contact the project team to implement APIs based on the presented specification. The new API services, which are not in the scope of the current development phase of the new system, will be provided in the next version of the API upon approval by the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 20-12)

33. Delegates and participants believed that the new system is highly important for UN/LOCODE maintenance, publication and integration into other business-critical trade management systems. Therefore, delegates and participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the project team, the Steering Committee, IMO, and testers, and encouraged the team to continue their excellent and dedicated work to put the new system into production as scheduled. (Decision 20-13).

34. Delegates and participants expressed their sincere gratitude to CNIS for their support for the UN/LOCODE Re-engineering project. It showcases the support to UN/LOCODE through resources from stakeholders in the UN/LOCODE business community. (Decision 20-14)

³ Reference Data Model to API.

VIII. Future work and other business

35. Delegates and participants discussed a possible date and place to hold the next annual meeting. Face-to-face is preferred, but this will be subject to the COVID-19 situation, especially the easing of travel restrictions at the global level.

IX. Adoption of decisions and the report

36. Delegates and participants agreed to decisions 1 to 14 and the draft report. (Decision 20-15)
