



Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business**Twenty-ninth session**

Geneva, 9-10 November 2023

**Report of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation
and Electronic Business on its twenty-ninth session****I. Attendance**

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its 29th Plenary in person on 9 and 10 November 2023. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Sue Probert (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Chairperson of UN/CEFACT.
2. The following countries were represented: Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, United States, and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were also present.
3. The following international organizations participated in the meeting: the World Trade Organization (WTO); the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Sustainable Transport Division, Sustainable Energy Division and Environment Division. The following non-governmental and observer organizations participated in the meeting: Global Standards 1 (GS1) and the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT).
4. The ECE Deputy Executive Secretary opened the session and welcomed delegates participating in person. He highlighted the increasing significance of UN/CEFACT's work and recognized the growing engagement of United Nations Member States in formulating recommendations, standards and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business. Noting the numerous challenges affecting global trade, he underscored the value and the core role of UN/CEFACT in creating public goods and emphasized the value of such a longstanding multilateral platform for facilitating trade and designing lasting solutions. He further emphasized the importance of maintaining and promoting UN/CEFACT flagship standards, highlighting their relevance to the ECE cross-cutting priority themes of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and of digital and green transformations for sustainable development, emanating from the recent Commission sessions. He stressed on the valuable contribution of UN/CEFACT tools and standards to emerging and cutting-edge issues such as reducing the carbon footprint, enhancing the transparency of supply chains and improving multimodal connectivity. The Deputy Executive Secretary encouraged United Nations Member States to take stronger ownership of the UN/CEFACT deliverables



produced by private and public sector experts and expressed hope for increasingly more diversified and global representation in the UN/CEFACT expert community.

5. The Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan delivered his welcome remarks. He expressed Kyrgyzstan's strong commitment to strengthening the country's trade facilitation mechanisms and to ensuring the successful implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Recognizing the challenges faced by the global trade and logistics and noting dependence of cross-border trade on paper-based transactions, he emphasized the importance of harnessing the potential of digital solutions to facilitate trade across borders. He welcomed the policy recommendations, guidance materials and standards on digitalisation, data exchange and interoperability developed by UN/CEFACT, which support ECE member States in building and strengthening a digital ecosystem through multilateral collaborations and mutual recognition of solutions for digitalisation. He also expressed a keen interest in collaborating with ECE and UN/CEFACT on technical cooperation and capacity-building activities, particularly on training activities for the country to increase the adoption, implementation and visibility of UN/CEFACT deliverables.

6. The UN/CEFACT Chair thanked the delegates who travelled from all over the world to participate in the session in person. She expressed appreciation to United Nations Member States that contribute to the ongoing work of UN/CEFACT, and that recognize and utilize its deliverables. She stressed the importance of maintaining UN/CEFACT standards and urged UN/CEFACT members to mobilise more resources (including extra-budgetary resources), to assist the ECE secretariat as well as additional volunteer experts. She encouraged further efforts to foster stronger ties with key partner organizations, such as the World Customs Organization (WCO). She also highlighted the importance of the election procedure taking place during this Plenary for the Vice Chairs and Regional Rapporteurs.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

7. The ECE secretariat informed the Plenary that the draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/1/Rev.1.

8. The amendments included the addition of UN/CEFACT Reference Data Models under item 6 (b) and updated titles of English-only documents under agenda items 6 (c) (i) and (ii). No further suggestions were made by session participants to revise the agenda.

Plenary decision 23-01: The Plenary adopted the *Revised Annotated Provisional Agenda for the Twenty-Ninth Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/1/Rev.1).

III. Elections (agenda item 2)

9. The UN/CEFACT Chair announced the election of new Bureau officers and invited relevant United Nations Member States to present the candidatures for the nominees. The ECE secretariat had received a total of six nominations for Vice Chairs from Australia, Azerbaijan, Canada, France, Italy and Kyrgyzstan, and three nominations for Regional Rapporteurs for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America. Two of the current Vice Chairs from France and Italy were nominated for re-election to serve a second term. The other four nominees were new candidates for Vice Chairmanship roles. One nomination of the Regional Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific was for the re-election to serve a second term; the other two nominations were for new candidates.

10. Representatives from the delegations of Australia, Canada, Italy and Kyrgyzstan presented the candidatures and profiles of their nominees in person, while representatives from the delegations of Azerbaijan and France delivered written statements, through the ECE secretariat, to present their nominees. All nominated Vice Chairs were elected by acclamation.

Plenary decision 23-02: Noting and appreciating the balanced representation of the private and public sectors in the UN/CEFACT Bureau, the Plenary elected all six Vice Chair candidates by acclamation for the period 2023-2026:

- Mr. Steve Capell of Australia, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (private sector);
- Mr. Aliakbar Heydarov of Azerbaijan, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (public sector);
- Ms. Nancy Norris of Canada, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (public sector);
- Ms. Hanane Becha of France, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (private sector);
- Ms. Liliana Fratini Passi of Italy, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (private sector); and
- Mr. Nurbek Maksutov of Kyrgyzstan, as UN/CEFACT Vice Chair (public sector).

11. The delegate of United States congratulated the Bureau officers on their election and welcomed the diversity of the new UN/CEFACT Bureau. They also thanked the current UN/CEFACT Chair for her excellent work in guiding the important work of UN/CEFACT over the years given the extraordinary complexity of its activities. To achieve a suitable balance of both public and private interests in the UN/CEFACT Bureau, they informally proposed that United Nations Member States consider electing a Chair from the government sector at the upcoming UN/CEFACT Plenary in 2024. The delegate also invited further discussion on how UN/CEFACT could benefit from amendments to its rules and procedures, to possibly reform and improve its functioning, especially, but not exclusively regarding the composition of its Bureau.

12. The delegate of the Russian Federation expressed deep gratitude for the work delivered by the outgoing UN/CEFACT Bureau members. They expressed hope that these members, with their rich experience, would continue contributing to UN/CEFACT activities. The delegate thanked the outgoing Vice Chair, Mr. Aleksei Bondarenko, for fulfilling his service and anticipated his continued contribution to UN/CEFACT. They appreciated the new Bureau's balanced composition and welcomed the public sector's representation, especially from the ECE programme countries, such as Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. The delegate encouraged UN/CEFACT's proactive and effective work in the future.

13. The delegate of the United Kingdom thanked the Chair, the ECE Deputy Executive Secretary and the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan for their insightful opening remarks. They appreciated the dedication of the incoming and returning Vice Chairs and Member States' nominations for the Bureau officers. They underscored UN/CEFACT's dependence on volunteer expertise and the importance of the global public-private collaboration. The delegate welcomed the suggestion offered by the United States for a discussion aimed at further strengthening UN/CEFACT and exploring ways to enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of its work, including in supporting cross-border paperless trade.

14. The elected Vice Chairs thanked their delegations for supporting their candidacies and recognized the regional and global impact of UN/CEFACT and its work. They welcomed the opportunity to serve as Bureau Vice Chairs in the upcoming term and showed a strong commitment to enhancing ongoing work and maintaining cooperation with partners. They also expressed interest in exploring more areas of UN/CEFACT work. Finally, they thanked the outgoing Bureau members for their dedication and contributions during their term.

15. Elections were announced for the roles of the Regional Rapporteurs for the period of 2023-2025. The ECE secretariat received three nominations from Brazil, Japan and Senegal for the regions of Latin America, Asia and the Pacific and Africa. The roles will involve promoting UN/CEFACT activities and mobilizing expert support within the respective regions. All nominated Regional Rapporteurs were elected by acclamation.

Plenary decision 23-03: Noting and appreciating the geographic balance of nominees and the importance of the role of Regional Rapporteurs in promoting UN/CEFACT activities in their respective regions, the Plenary elected by acclamation the following representatives for the period 2023-2025:

- Mr. Hisanao Sugamata, as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific;

- Ms. Nogaye Toure Diagne, as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Africa; and
- Mr. Eduardo Leite, as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Latin America.

IV. Matters arising since the twenty-eighth session (agenda item 3)

16. The ECE secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/3, *Matters Arising Since the Twenty-Eighth Session*. This document outlines the secretariat's support to UN/CEFACT and summarizes normative, capacity building, technical assistance and cooperation activities in response to emerging needs for sustainable and digital trade facilitation, and for achieving the cross-sectoral strategic goals of the ECE. The report specifically highlights the ECE secretariat support to:

- The provision of support to produce UN/CEFACT norms and standards on the themes of the 69th and 70th Commission sessions. Such efforts also contributed to addressing supply chain disruptions, including through the digitalisation and dematerialisation of global supply chains. Examples include the new ECE Recommendation No. 48: Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies (NTFBs); the annual release of flagship e-business standards for trade and transport facilitation, and progress made on developing policy recommendations and guidance on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) monitoring and reporting as well as traceability of ESG performance along global value chains;
- Capacity-building and technical assistance activities to ECE program countries, including in cooperation with other United Nations entities such as the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNCTAD, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the other United Nations Regional Commissions. This includes the joint production of the fifth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation and support to the WTO TFA implementation in ECE program countries;
- Intersectoral activities, which include the contribution to the deliberations of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, cooperation with the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public Private Partnership, as well as with the ECE Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Energy and Environment Divisions;
- Collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including international standard-setting organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), GS1 and the Universal Postal Union (UPU); and
- Collaboration with regional bodies, such as the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV), Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), Directorate General for Informatics (DG DIGIT), Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), and Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

17. The ECE Regional Adviser presented a report (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/INF.1), detailing the capacity-building activities and technical cooperation projects that promote the implementation of the secretariat's normative work. He shared examples of activities that facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices among the ECE membership, particularly the 17 programme countries. He also highlighted the implementation of the UN/CEFACT Package of Standards for Multimodal Transport Data and Document Exchange and showcased examples of several pilot projects such as towards digitizing intermodal transport corridors.

18. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division congratulated the newly elected Bureau officers. She noted the secretariat's constraints, especially limited

resources, in fulfilling the mandates of UN/CEFACT. She stressed the need for strategic focus in executing the UN/CEFACT mandate and expressed commitment to continue working closely with ECE member States on setting strategic priorities, mobilizing resources and responding to specific country requests.

19. The delegate of Ukraine expressed appreciation to the ECE secretariat, the UN/CEFACT Chair and the Bureau for their valuable work on trade facilitation, such as the development, maintenance and application of e-business standards, technical specifications and reference data models. The delegate also thanked the Regional Adviser and the Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division for their ongoing support through analytical research and capacity-building on trade facilitation and regional cooperation. They highlighted key UN/CEFACT deliverables, including ECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations No. 36, No. 37 and No. 38. They further highlighted the relevance of UN/CEFACT activities, especially in the context of regional conflicts, and stressed the importance of advancing trade corridors and regional cooperation.

20. The delegate of the Russian Federation expressed appreciation for the work of UN/CEFACT, for the detailed report on its activities during the reporting period and commended the work of the UN/CEFACT Bureau, experts and secretariat. Notably, the delegate acknowledged the progress made by the UN/CEFACT in streamlining trade procedures, including the development of ECE Recommendation No. 48: Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies, the Single Window Assessment Methodology, the update of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library and the preparation of numerous high-quality session documents covering a wide range of issues related to international trade, transport and logistics, travel and tourism, as well as the green and digital transformations. They appreciated the contribution of UN/CEFACT to the 70th session of the Commission. The delegate thanked the secretariat for organizing the Forums in Geneva and Bangkok earlier this year and reaffirmed their readiness to cooperate with UN/CEFACT and support its activities.

21. In a written statement, through the ECE secretariat, the delegate of Uzbekistan expressed gratitude for the ECE support to their efforts in exploring the potential of advanced technology, such as blockchain, to enhance transparency and streamline trade operations. They highlighted the ongoing support of ECE in preparation of a policy and regulatory analysis on the application of blockchain technology in Uzbekistan. A multistakeholder workshop was conducted in Tashkent in October 2023 during the International Week of Innovation Ideas “InnoWeek 2023”, as part of the joint preparation process for the study.

Plenary decision 23-04: The Plenary welcomed the secretariat report on *Matters Arising Since the Twenty-Eighth Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/3) and the *Report from ECTD Regional Adviser* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/INF.1). The Plenary acknowledged the relevance of UN/CEFACT work in supporting the digitalisation of supply chains as well as its contribution to the ECE cross-cutting priority themes (the circular economy, the sustainable use of natural resources, and digital and green transformations for sustainable development) following the discussions at the 69th and 70th sessions of the Commission. The Plenary requested that the secretariat report on matters arising at the next Plenary in 2024 and invited donors and development partners to support the secretariat to mobilise resources.

V. Bureau overview of developments (agenda item 4)

22. The Chair presented the *UN/CEFACT Bureau Report of Developments* providing an overview of activities during the period from the 28th Plenary until August 2023, including Bureau decisions, a summary of promotional activities, and the project activities in each Programme Development Area (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/4). The report highlights the following:

- 10 regular Bureau calls, discussing project development and procedural points;
- 62 Bureau decisions, as detailed in its Annex I;
- 68 events in which UN/CEFACT was represented, detailed in its Annex II;

- 37 projects which were active or proposed during this period, detailed in its Annex III; and
- 1,623 experts registered within UN/CEFACT.

23. The Chair invited the outgoing Vice Chairs to briefly present the current work under their respective Programme Development Areas, covering the status of ongoing projects and an overview of upcoming deliverables. The Chair shared an overview of the 40th and 41st UN/CEFACT Forums which were held in Geneva and Bangkok respectively and announced the tentative dates of the 42nd and 43rd UN/CEFACT Forums to be held in 2024. These networking Forums will, as always, provide opportunities for experts to share progress on their activities and to advance project implementation. She further invited Member States who are willing to contribute to the preparations of these events to reach out to the secretariat.

24. The Chair thanked all the outgoing Bureau members for their guidance, hard work and dedication during the last three years.

Plenary decision 23-05: The Plenary expressed appreciation for the work and guidance of the outgoing UN/CEFACT Bureau. It took note of the *UN/CEFACT Bureau Report of Developments* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/4) and requested that the Bureau provide the next report to the Plenary in 2024.

VI. Reports of rapporteurs (agenda item 5)

25. The Regional Rapporteur for Africa presented the *Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/5) and the Regional Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific presented the *Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/6).

26. These reports underline regional initiatives and events in Africa such as those in support of the Preferential e-Certificate of Origin project, the implementation of Single Window, the application of ECE Recommendation No. 34: Data Simplification and Standardization for International Trade in Africa, as well as an overview of activities and regional meetings, including those where UN/CEFACT deliverables were discussed and implemented in the regions.

Plenary decision 23-06: The Plenary took note of the *Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/5) and the *Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/6) and requested that the Regional Rapporteurs provide their next reports to the Plenary in 2024.

VII. Recommendations, standards and deliverables supporting implementation (agenda item 6)

A. Recommendations

27. The ECE secretariat presented the 2023 edition of the *Summary of ECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations* (ECE/TRADE/475) which provides an update on the status and availability of policy recommendations adopted by the UN/CEFACT Plenary since the previous, 2019 edition. This current edition includes summaries of Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief, Recommendation No. 45: Minimum Standards for Ship Agents and Ship Brokers, Recommendation No. 46: Enhancing Traceability and Transparency of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector, Recommendation No. 47: Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response, and Recommendation No. 48: Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies as well as the revised Recommendation No. 2: ECE Layout Key: Semantic Information and Codes in International Trade Data Exchange.

28. Furthermore, the ECE secretariat introduced the *Recommendation No. 48: Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/7), submitted to the Plenary for approval. Building on ECE Recommendation No. 4 and in response to existing barriers to active private sector

engagement in NTFBs, ECE Recommendation No. 48 offers actionable guidance on creating a trusted and effective environment for public-private sector cooperation in NTFBs.

29. The highlights of the new recommendation were presented by the WTO representative who led the drafting team in her previous role as UN/CEFACT Domain Coordinator, with contributions from the NTFB members and relevant experts from Canada, Ecuador, Madagascar, Nigeria, Norway, Rwanda, Türkiye and the United States. The UNCTAD representative complemented the discussion by further highlighting the importance of capacity-building to foster private sector engagement in NTFBs.

30. The Chair expressed appreciation to the project leader and the project team for their hard work.

Plenary decision 23-07: The Plenary approved ECE *Recommendation No.48: Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/7), highlighting the importance of capacity-building activities to facilitate private-public collaboration for implementing trade facilitation reforms in United Nations Member States.

B. Standards

31. The Chair announced that, since the last Plenary, and according to agreed UN/CEFACT procedures, the secretariat had issued the following:

- Versions 22B and 23A of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library;
- Versions 22B and 23A of the UN/CEFACT XML Schema Library;
- Versions D.22B and D.23A of the UN/EDIFACT Directory;
- Versions 2022-1 and 2022-2 of the UN/LOCODE Directory;
- UN/CEFACT JSON-LD Web Vocabulary;
- UN/CEFACT Reference Data Models (RDMs);
- All UN/CEFACT e-business standards; and
- All UN/CEFACT e-business context files, schemas, and OpenAPI specifications on the open-source GitHub Environment.

32. The secretariat further shared examples of the uptake of UN/CEFACT flagship standards, highlighting those that are used the most, such as United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE), the United Nations Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (UN/FLUX) and the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Admissions, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT). The Chair expressed appreciation to UN/CEFACT for the technical and e-business expert teams that develop and maintain all of these standards and technical specifications.

33. The delegate of the United States commended the work of the UN/CEFACT experts' community in maintaining standards, specifically addressing the cybersecurity concerns affecting the UN/LOCODE system. They called on United Nations Member States to collaborate in finding solutions for a sustainable, strong, functional, and fully optimized UN/LOCODE system.

34. The ECE secretariat provided an update on its efforts towards addressing the UN/LOCODE cybersecurity issues and enhancing its overall user friendliness. There are ongoing efforts to secure additional funding to facilitate a comprehensive overhaul of the UN/LOCODE system, this being a flagship ECE standard, used globally by major transport and logistic operators.

35. The GS1 representative reported on their collaboration with UN/CEFACT and shared examples of successful adoption of its data exchange standards, such as UN/EDIFACT. They stressed the need for digital transformation in the private sector, with a focus on sustainability and circularity. They underscored the value of using UN/CEFACT code lists and the semantic interoperability of its standards. Looking ahead, GS1 pointed to the growing demand for a shift from a document-centric towards a data-centric approach. This shift, they noted, will open up new possibilities for the development of digital solutions.

Plenary decision 23-08: The Plenary took note of the data exchange standards presented by the Chair and requested that they continue to be updated on a regular basis, emphasizing the importance of maintaining such standards and promoting their uptake at the global, regional, and national levels.

C. Deliverables in support of implementation

1. Reports and executive guides

36. The UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain provided the following deliverable to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/8, *Report of the Single Window Domain – Single Window Assessment Methodology*. This document offers guidance and a tool for assessing the implementation of a Single Window, which would be beneficial for any stakeholders interested in enhancing its implementation. The report outlines critical factors to be considered when conducting a self-assessment, such as analysing the functioning and key indicators of the Single Window, surveying users to determine their level of satisfaction, and identifying areas for improvement.

Plenary decision 23-09: The Plenary took note of the *Report of the Single Window Domain – Single Window Assessment Methodology* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/8), highlighting the importance of capacity-building activities in implementing Single Windows in United Nations Member States.

37. The UN/CEFACT Trade Procedures Facilitation and Agri-food Domains provided the following deliverable to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/10, *Report of the Trade Procedures Facilitation and Agri-food Domains – Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange*. This document focuses on the exchange of conformity attestations pertaining to traded physical products. It explores the challenges associated with existing systems for conformity attestation exchange within supply chains, which arise largely from a lack of reliable mechanisms for accessing conformity attestations and linking attestation to physical product. A set of ideas explored in this report outline possible ways of linking conformity attestations to physical product, using existing identifiers and technology.

Plenary decision 23-10: The Plenary took note of the *Report of the Trade Procedures Facilitation and Agricultural Domains – Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/10).

38. The UN/CEFACT Travel and Tourism Domain provided the following deliverable to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/9, *Report of the Travel and Tourism Domain – Technical Application of Business Standards for Sustainable Tourism*. This document guides governments on how to foster and advance sustainable tourism, incorporating UN/CEFACT's work on Experience Programs. It aims to establish definitions and guidelines for sustainable tourism, offering elements for developing certification and labelling systems.

Plenary decision 23-11: The Plenary took note of the *Report of the Travel and Tourism Domain – Technical Application of Business Standards for Sustainable Tourism* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/9).

39. The UN/CEFACT eDATA Management Domain provided the following deliverables to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/11, *Report of the eDATA Management Domain – Transfer of Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records Compliant Titles*. This document focuses on the specific type of electronic transferable record (ETR) that corresponds to the transferable Bill of Lading. It explains the key requirements laid out in the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR)

that an electronic record must satisfy to be an ETR. This ensures its legal validity, even across international borders, by mirroring the same legal effects of its paper equivalent. Besides explaining the practical implications of MLETR requirements, this report provides guidance to those implementing electronic negotiable Bills of Lading as ETRs, benefiting the business users they serve.

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/12, *Report of the eDATA Management Domain – Artificial Intelligence in Trade Facilitation*. This document highlights the ongoing technological revolution, offering fresh insights on the potential influence of innovations and technology use, while outlining challenges and risks to be taken into consideration. It positions artificial intelligence as a key emerging technology with the capacity to significantly transform the global economy and international trade across all sectors.

Plenary decision 23-12: The Plenary took note of the two *Reports of the eDATA Management Domain – Transfer of Model Law on Electronic Transferrable Records-Compliant Titles* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/11), and *Artificial Intelligence in Trade Facilitation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/12).

40. Document *United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/13) was presented to the Plenary for noting. The secretariat briefly introduced and formally launched the updated United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) e-learning platform, representing a major reference resource for government officials and traders around the world. Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, this knowledge sharing web-tool is aimed at better supporting countries in their efforts to strengthen transparency for rules and regulations on trade facilitation, streamline clearance processes and harmonize trade documentation requirements, for easier and faster trade transactions across borders. The representative of the WTO requested that the link to the updated tool be available on the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility website and the maintenance be shared between the two organizations.

41. The ECE Sustainable Transport Division presented the Inland Transport and Trade Connectivity e-learning platform LearnITC – a knowledge sharing platform designed to provide training on the United Nations inland transport legal instruments, trade facilitation principles, policy recommendations and standards. The platform also includes other tools to help stakeholders attain sustainable transport and smarter connectivity, which can be of value to UN/CEFACT experts and partners. The supporting training material is structured in various categories, covering trade and transport facilitation and includes a direct link to the TFIG. Over 11 courses are currently available in English, French and Russian to support national stakeholders in developing relevant policy tools.

42. UN/CEFACT has continued to develop executive guides that provide a brief, high-level description of the technical work of UN/CEFACT. Three such guides were presented to the Plenary for noting:

- The *Executive Guide on United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations Maintenance* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/14). This guide provides an overview of the UN/LOCODE uptake and maintenance process and the benefits, highlighting the need to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system, which requires additional resources;
- The *Executive Guide on UN/CEFACT JSON-LD Web Vocabulary* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/15). This guide provides an overview of the JSON-LD vocabulary, an initiative to support better understanding, reuse and interoperability of the harmonized data across different domains. The UN/CEFACT JSON-LD web vocabulary is based on the UN/CEFACT Buy-Ship-Pay data model, which is globally recognized schematics for defining terms in international trade. A web vocabulary offers a method for annotating any form of content (e.g., a webpage or commercial transaction) with both human-readable and machine-comprehensible specifications; and
- The *Executive Guide on Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/16/Rev.1). This guide outlines the concepts of

digital product conformity certificate exchange and their application in developing ESG regulations. The principles discussed could inspire enhancements to existing supply platforms, promoting the decentralisation of inputs and expanding user access through off-platform data analysis.

Plenary decision 23-13: The Plenary took note of the following guidance material: the *United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/13); the *Executive Guide on UN/LOCODE Maintenance* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/14); the *Executive Guide on UN/CEFACT JSON-LD Web Vocabulary* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/15); the *Executive Guide on Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/16/Rev.1).

2. Deliverables in support of the outcomes of the 70th Commission session

43. The ECE secretariat presented the following deliverables in support to the outcomes of 69th and 70th Commission sessions focused on the topics of promoting circular economy and sustainable use of resources in the ECE region and digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region, for information:

- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/INF.2 – *Toolbox of UN/CEFACT Instruments Related to the 2023 Commission Session*. This toolbox of pertinent ECE tools and instruments, including its efforts to address supply chain disruptions through digitalization and dematerialization, to demonstrate the impact and relevance of UN/CEFACT standards, which are designed to facilitate international trade and enhance economic cooperation.
- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/17 – *ECE Policy Paper on Accelerating the Transition Towards a Circular Economy in the ECE Region: Improving the Traceability of Products along International Value Chains*. This policy paper provides recommendations to governments on how to design, develop and implement a policy framework on traceability and transparency of sustainable and circular value chains in the region of the ECE. It reviews the state of play of traceability and transparency approaches in the agri-food, garment and footwear and minerals sectors which are critical to the circular transition. It is the result of an in-depth analysis of existing policies, regulations and guidelines from governments and organizations worldwide, and international best practices. The policy paper is launched under Circular STEP, the ECE platform that facilitates sharing of good practices and the engagement of stakeholders in the circular economy transition.
- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/18 – *ECE and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Study: Improving the Sustainability of Used Clothing: Global, European and Chilean Perspectives: Executive Summary*. In 2023, ECE and ECLAC conducted a global study on second-hand clothing trade flows, with a focus on Europe as an origin and Chile as a destination. This Executive Summary highlights preliminary findings and recommendations to improve the sustainability of used clothes worldwide, in Europe and Chile. The full study produced under the ECE-UN/CEFACT Sustainability Pledge initiative, funded by the European Union, will be published in 2024.

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/19 – *Updated Report on the Blockchain Pilots Project for the Garment and Footwear Sector: Proof of Concept Report: Harnessing the potential of blockchain technology for due diligence and sustainability in textile and leather value chains*. This proof of concept report presents key findings and recommendations from the blockchain pilots project, that has engaged garment and footwear industry representatives globally, to test the application of an ECE traceability and transparency standard designed to trace products using a blockchain system. This report is an update of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/9. This blockchain pilots project was implemented under the ECE-UN/CEFACT Sustainability Pledge initiative, funded by the European Union.

Plenary decision 23-14: The Plenary took note of the *Toolbox of UN/CEFACT Instruments Related to the 2023 Commission Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/INF.2); *ECE Policy Paper on Accelerating the Transition Towards a Circular Economy in the ECE Region*

(ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/17); the *ECE and ECLAC Study: Improving the Sustainability of Used Clothing: Global, European and Chilean Perspectives: Executive Summary* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/18); the *Updated Report on the Blockchain Pilots Project for the Garment and Footwear Sector: Proof of Concept Report: Harnessing the potential of blockchain technology for due diligence and sustainability in textile and leather value chains* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/19) and invited UN/CEFACT to continue its work to advance the green and digital transformations in textiles, a critical sector for the circular economy.

44. The ECE secretariat further presented the note outlining proposed UN/CEFACT solutions in support of Digital Product Passports.

- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/20 - *UN/CEFACT Solutions in Support of Digital Product Passports Note*. This note describes why the ECE and UN/CEFACT standards and tools are suited to the development of Digital Product Passports (DPP). It explains the current and emerging ECE-UN/CEFACT instruments that can support the development of DPPs, including the traceability and transparency standards developed with support of the European Union under the ECE-UN/CEFACT Sustainability Pledge initiative.

Plenary decision 23-15: The Plenary took note of the *UN/CEFACT Solutions in Support of Digital Product Passports Note* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/20) and encouraged implementation of its recommendations on developing further tools for DPPs.

3. Deliverables in support of the Joint United Nations Regional Commissions Approach to Trade Facilitation

45. The ECE secretariat presented the key findings of the fifth edition of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. The purpose of the survey is to assess progress in implementing trade facilitation measures and thus help identify policy, legal, procedural, regulatory and technical gaps that affect implementation of such measures.

46. The 2023 Global Report was officially launched during the WTO Public Forum in September 2023. This survey represents a collaborative initiative under the Joint United Nations Regional Commissions' Approach, agreed in Beirut in January 2010 by the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions. A total of 48 ECE member States submitted their contributions to the 2023 edition of the survey, with the overall trade facilitation implementation rate in the ECE region rising from 76 per cent in 2021 to 80 per cent in 2023. The secretariat thanked ECE member States for their responses to the survey and noted that the regional ECE report is scheduled to be launched in early 2024.

Plenary decision 23-16: The Plenary took note of the *United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023: Key findings for the ECE Region* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/21) and congratulated countries in the region on progress in their trade facilitation performance since 2021. The Plenary encouraged further collaboration with other United Nations Regional Commissions and with UNCTAD on the production of focused policy briefs to inform the development of national roadmaps for sustainable and digital trade facilitation in emerging and transition economies.

47. The delegate of Azerbaijan thanked the ECE secretariat for their continued support to ECE member States. Stressing their participation in the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, the delegate noted significant progress and the increase in Azerbaijan's implementation rate from 48.4 per cent in 2015 to 86 per cent in 2021. To build on this progress achieved, the delegate requested the secretariat to conduct an analytical study and host a technical workshop to identify existing gaps. This would bolster efforts to monitor progress in implementing digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures and promote evidence-based policymaking. The study would also support the country in its preparations for the WTO accession, which has been actively resumed as of 2023.

48. The delegate of Uzbekistan expressed gratitude to ECE for supporting ongoing reforms in customs administration and implementation of trade facilitation measures. They provided an overview of activities carried out in line with the requirements of the WTO TFA,

including the establishment of the National Committee for Trade Facilitation in October 2023. They further shared that according to the 2023 Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, Uzbekistan's compliance with the WTO TFA was assessed at 90 per cent. They stressed the importance of further support in implementing the WTO TFA and requested that the secretariat produce an analytical study with a focus on trade facilitation, considering the accession process to the WTO. They also requested a technical workshop to be organized to present the key findings and recommendations emerging from the study.

Plenary decision 23-17: The Plenary noted the requests from Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan for technical assistance in producing an analytical study, building on the results of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, which would support them in advancing their WTO accession process.

VIII. Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Europe Subprogramme 4 and Subprogramme 6 by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (agenda item 7)

49. In 2022, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) evaluated the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability, and integration of cross-cutting issues in ECE subprogramme 4 and subprogramme 6 for 2018-2021. The evaluation was part of the United Nations secretariat's regular program, which periodically evaluates selected aspects of its operations. The Director of the ECE ECTD briefed the Plenary on the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation, the associated management response, and plans to implement relevant recommendations. The Director stressed that the OIOS report noted that the Division had "found its niche in a crowded space of trade and economic cooperation by leveraging its comparative advantages towards strengthening member States' economic cooperation and integration".

50. The delegate of Kyrgyzstan thanked ECE for their contribution to the socio-economic development of their country. They welcomed the positive results of the OIOS evaluation of ECE subprogramme 4 and subprogramme 6. They further emphasized ECE's support in key projects, such as the joint launch of the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap, cooperation with the Kyrgyz Economic University and implementation of public private partnership projects. They welcomed assistance in enhancing the country's export potential and its integration into the global supply chain and looked forward to further cooperation.

Plenary decision 23-18: The Plenary welcomed the results of the evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability and integration of cross-cutting issues in subprogramme 4 and subprogramme 6 undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (ECE Executive Committee informal document no. 2023/21). The Plenary welcomed the resulting recommendations and called upon United Nations Member States and development partners to work with the secretariat to support the implementation of the ECE strategies on resource mobilisation, partnerships and technical cooperation.

IX. Activities of other Economic Commission for Europe bodies and international organizations of interest to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (agenda item 8)

51. Building on the outcomes of the meeting with the Chairpersons of the ECE Sectoral Committees, held by ECE Executive Secretary in April 2023, the ECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT have been sharing information about ongoing collaboration with other Committees and have been participating in each other's sessions. The secretariat invited four organizational units to join and highlight areas for current and potential future cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

- The ECE Environment Division representative gave an overview of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR). Adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2021, the Aarhus Convention on Access to

Information, Public Participations in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters currently has 47 contracting parties. Examples of contribution to the cross-sectoral priority goals of the Commission were presented, such as the toolbox which includes recommendations, good practice database, analytical studies and other resources. Regarding the scope of the PRTR protocol, which is open to all United Nations Member States, the protocol covers 65 activities and 86 substance categories. It was highlighted that the European PRTR regulation, which is currently being updated, is largely based on the protocol.

52. The ECE secretariat shared information about UN/CEFACT cooperation with the Aarhus convention secretariat and joint activities, such as recently held joint workshops in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and in Geneva. The Chair and the secretariat further highlighted the broader synergies between the work of the Environment Division and the ECTD ESG and circular economy work, as well potential cooperation with the UN/CEFACT Transport and Logistics Domain.

- The ECE Sustainable Transport Division representative shared information about the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), which are among a total of 60 conventions administered by the Division. He also noted the ongoing efforts to digitalize both. They referenced the eCMR Protocol, the implementation of which is supported by the UN/CEFACT data exchange standard, developed in 2018. Among the examples of cooperation, the use of UN/CEFACT code lists was highlighted. In closing, they noted the upcoming meeting of the informal ad hoc experts' group on digitalisation of the Carnet de Passages en Douane (CPD), in December 2023, and invited UN/CEFACT experts to participate.

53. The delegate of the United Kingdom thanked the presenters and requested a clarification on the use of digital data collected conformant to the eCMR and eTIR Conventions. The delegate further encouraged a high-level discussion between ECE and WCO in the efforts to harmonize their data models. They also expressed interest in participating in the upcoming CPD meeting in December 2023 and requested to receive an invitation.

- The ECE Sustainable Energy Division representative shared information about their activities and tools from perspective of the Expert Group on Resource Management secretariat. He presented relevant resource management tools, such as the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) and United Nations Resource Management Systems (UNRMS), focusing on their use in the context of the critical raw materials (CRM). UNFC and UNRMS are comprehensive frameworks aimed at managing mining risks and promoting sustainable resource management. Among areas for potential cooperation, he noted a joint work in the framework of UN/CEFACT Critical Minerals Traceability and Sustainability project, aimed at developing global interoperable traceability standards for the CRM value chain.
- The representative of the ECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards secretariat gave an overview of their activities, including the ECE studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade (RPBT). She briefly shared findings and recommendations from the recently conducted RPBT studies in Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, highlighting their relevance to circular economy and digital trade. In closing, she highlighted synergies with the UN/CEFACT standards and ECE recommendations as well as their relevance in implementing recommendations of the abovementioned studies.

54. ECTD Director emphasized the importance of this dialogue and reaffirmed the benefits of cooperation and coordination with other ECE bodies and international organizations, including on the circular economy transition and the digital and green transformations for sustainable development.

X. Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (agenda item 9)

55. The Vice Chair of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) presented the *Report of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations at its 2023 meeting* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/22) which summarises the work of the group over the past period, as presented in the, as well as the *Programme of Work for the period of 2024-2025* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/23). She highlighted a number of issues for attention, particularly the establishment of the GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) and the UN/LOCODE Task Force, whose purpose is:

- To identify small fishery ports to meet the FAO demand, as recommended by the FAO Global Record Working Group;
- To study the feasibility of fast-tracking UN/LOCODE as an ISO standard; and
- To further study how to address the co-existence of point-locations and area locations in the current code list.

56. She also announced that the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE is scheduled for 6 and 7 May 2024 in Hamburg, Germany.

57. The delegate of the United States reiterated that there is still much work to be done to optimize the functioning of the UN/LOCODE system and fully strengthen its cybersecurity posture and reiterated their earlier called on Member States to work together to find solutions for a sustainable, strong, functional, and fully optimized UN/LOCODE system.

58. The Chair commented on the expansion of the use of UN/LOCODE by the fishery industry. Similarly, the demand for identifying fishery vessels was raised like the IMO number assigned to maritime vessels. She also asked participants how many countries were yet to nominate their national focal points (NFPs). The secretariat echoed the importance of these nominations as well as the importance of active engagement of NFPs in the UN/LOCODE maintenance.

59. The delegate of the United Kingdom informed the attendees that the re-nomination of their NFP was forthcoming and expressed willingness to assist in the issue raised by the delegate of the United States.

Plenary decision 23-19: The Plenary welcomed and endorsed the *Report of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations at its 2023 meeting* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/22), recognizing the importance of this work.

Plenary decision 23-20: The Plenary expressed its satisfaction with the work undertaken by the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE), approved its *Programme of Work for the period 2024-2025* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/23) and decided to extend its mandate for the period 2024-2025. The Plenary referred to the need to raise resources for the maintenance of the standard and the upgrade of its supporting system.

Plenary decision 23-21: The Plenary encouraged all delegations to have a UN/LOCODE National Focal Point nominated by their country if not yet nominated and that the National Focal Points should actively work with the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to validate Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs).

XI. Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy (agenda item 10)

60. The secretariat presented the *Report of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy on its Activities in 2022-2023* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/24) for endorsement. The report contains a comprehensive summary of the key deliberations of the Team of Specialists

(ToS) about ESG traceability landscapes in the ECE region, encompassing policies, legislative framework and institutional arrangements. It outlines steps for transformative pathways leading towards sustainability, focusing on corporate strategies and actions, the role of advanced technology and net-zero carbon emission targets in value chains.

61. The secretariat shared updates on ongoing initiatives informing the meeting about the activities of the ToS (the EU-funded Sustainability Pledge project for traceability and transparency in the garment and footwear sector¹; the product circularity data project²; and the critical minerals traceability and sustainability project³). In addition, the ToS identified a set of implementation needs for ESG monitoring and reporting in the agri-food, textiles, and minerals sectors such as collaboration, interoperability, traceability, digitalisation, governance frameworks and incentives for data access and data sharing. On 9 May 2023, in its session coinciding with the 40th UN/CEFACT Forum, the ToS appointed its new Chair, after the previous Chair stepped down. Considering the fast-changing policy and regulatory landscape towards sustainability, accelerating the need for traceability approaches, the ToS concluded that a proposal could be developed to create a protocol for product-level ESG monitoring and reporting. This protocol should consider the development challenges faced by developing countries and transition economies.

Plenary decision 23-22: The Plenary expressed satisfaction with the work undertaken by the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy. The Plenary recognized the importance of the work in support of due diligence and verified ESG credentials in value chains of critical sectors for the digital and green transition. It endorsed the *Report of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy on its Activities in 2022-2023* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/24) and took note of the document ECE/EX/2022/L.17.

XII. Future challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business and UN/CEFACT prospective directions (agenda item 11)

62. For nearly forty years, UN/CEFACT has been a key forum for standards setting in the field of trade facilitation and electronic business. The goal of this session was to reflect on priority areas for the future, building on progress in key workstreams and activities, and to share views on desired developments in the governance of UN/CEFACT.

63. Regarding prospective directions for the work of UN/CEFACT delegates highlighted the importance of the following:

- (a) Strengthening the contribution of the UN/CEFACT work to the 70th Commission topic of the digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the ECE, particularly in critical sectors for the circular transition, such as agri-food, critical raw materials and textiles and clothing, and in the domain of supply chains security, such as the facilitation of green and digital trade and transport corridors. In this connection, the delegation of Italy stressed the relevance of the UN/CEFACT work on standards in the digital and sustainable textiles and open finance areas (e.g. for digital product passports), and the active engagement of its national industry actors.
- (b) Ensuring the sustainability of flagship information exchange standards such as the UN/CCL, its RDMs and their syntax deliverables, UN/EDIFACT, UN/LOCODE, and the United Nation Trade Data Elements Dictionary (UNTDDED), and the UN/CEFACT code lists, including through raising additional extra-budgetary resources.
- (c) Focusing efforts by looking into the relevance and impact of UN/CEFACT projects and deliverables and reviewing the existing strategy. This would involve a project development mechanism with key performance indicators, reflecting policy

¹ <https://unece.org/trade/traceability-sustainable-garment-and-footwear>

² <https://uncefact.unece.org/display/uncefactpublic/EXTENSION+TEXTILE+AND+LEATHER+BRS+PART+2%3A+Use+case+and+CCBDA+data+structure+supporting+product+circularity>

³ <https://uncefact.unece.org/display/uncefactpublic/Critical+Minerals+Traceability+and+Sustainability>

relevance, financial sustainability and the economic and market impact of deliverables for implementers and beneficiaries (i.e. cost savings).

- (d) Enhancing outreach and communication on the UN/CEFACT solutions, so that they are better known and more widely implemented and providing targeted support to small actors in emerging economies for them to better connect to regional and global value chains. Regarding this, the delegate of the Russian Federation proposed to strengthen the link and dialogue between the UN/CEFACT experts and industry players to understand their needs and design relevant solutions. This could be done through the side events during the Forum with participation of business community and industry representatives.
 - (e) Continuing targeted technical assistance and capacity building on the implementation of UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools in developing and transition countries. This would include supporting the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the 2023 United Nations Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. Regarding this, the delegates of both Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan reiterated their requests for targeted policy briefs that could inform the development of National Trade Facilitation Roadmaps in view of their accession to the WTO.
 - (f) Promoting further synergies between relevant ECE Working Parties and Sectoral Committees (such as environment governance, sustainable transport and energy). This includes collaboration with key international organizations and standards-setting bodies involved in sustainable and digital trade and transport facilitation. Reference was made to the importance of aligning efforts on data models that support information exchange for cross-border trade procedures, especially between UN/CEFACT and WCO, and standards-setting organizations such as IMO, IATA, Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA) and GS1.
64. Regarding potential developments to UN/CEFACT governance, the Chair recalled that delegates had:
- (a) Congratulated the newly appointed Bureau of Vice Chairs and welcomed the diverse Bureau composition, including in terms of representation of both the public and private sectors.
 - (b) Expressed appreciation for the Bureau's balanced representation in terms of gender, geography and advanced versus emerging economies. The appointment of Regional Rapporteurs, who will assist the Bureau in coordination and outreach activities, is expected to yield a highly productive tenure.
 - (c) Took note of the recommendation to consider electing a government representative as Chair of the Bureau at the 30th Plenary in 2024, in order to achieve a suitable balance of public and private interests, as expressed by the delegate of the United States of America under the Plenary agenda item 2.
 - (d) Took note that the delegate of the Netherlands conveyed appreciation for the cooperation that took place within the previous UN/CEFACT Bureau and mentioned the opportunities to engage with the newly elected Bureau. The Netherlands also accepted the invitation of the United States to work together with Member States and the secretariat on the future of UN/CEFACT.

Plenary decision 23-23 (related to agenda item 8): Noting the synergies between activities of the relevant Working Parties and Sectoral Committees within the ECE, the Plenary recommended that UN/CEFACT continue to strengthen cross-sectoral collaborations across the subsidiary bodies and subprogrammes of the ECE and beyond.

This will serve to support United Nations Member States in achieving their objectives of advancing the green and digital transitions for the circular economy and promote sustainable development in the ECE region and beyond.

XIII. Other business (agenda item 12)

65. No other business points were raised.

XIV. Adoption of decisions and draft report of the twenty-ninth session (agenda item 13)

66. In line with established practice, the secretariat read through the decisions taken during this session and the Plenary confirmed their approval. As for the report, the secretariat announced that it will be circulated to all Geneva Permanent Representations and the Bureau for subsequent approval.

Plenary decision 23-24: The Plenary approved the decisions of the UN/CEFACT at its twenty-ninth session. Considering that the draft report could not be circulated during the meeting for technical reasons, the Plenary requested the secretariat to distribute the report to all Geneva Permanent Representations and the Bureau for subsequent approval, in line with the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies.
