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ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

Item 4 of the provisional agenda,
Seventh session, 26-29 March 2001

REPORT OF THE UN/CEFACT STEERING GROUP (CSG) MEETING

Geneva, 31 March 2000

(First meeting 2000)

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Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Steering Group (CSG)

This document has been submitted by the UN/CEFACT Steering Group (CSG) for information as required under the UN/CEFACT procedures outlined in document TRADE/R.650. It is for information only. Items to be decided upon by the UN/CEFACT Plenary will be presented in a separate report from the Chairman to the CSG.

CSG Chair:

Ray Walker, United Kingdom - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair

CSG members present:

David Dobbing, Australia - CDWG Chair
Pierre Georget, France – EWG Chair
Tahseen Ahmad Khan, India
Rob van Kuik, WCO
Paivi Lehtonen, Finland
Alexander de Lijster, Netherlands
Klaus-Dieter Naujok, Canada – TMWG Chair
Emile Peeters, Belgium
Christina Wallén-Rahlén, Sweden
Christoph Wolf, Germany

Ex-officio members and Rapporteurs present:

Raul Colcher, Brazil – UN/CEFACT Vice Chair
Kenji Itoh, Japan - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair and Asia Rapporteur
David Marsh, United Kingdom - Legal Liaison Rapporteur
Teresa Sorrenti, United States - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair

Invitees

Seyed Ali Reza Cheraghi, Secretary, EAN Iran

Secretariat present:

Hans Hansell, Head of the secretariat
Rocio Cardenas
Jean Kubler
Vlasta Macku
Markus Pikart

Apologies:

Harry Featherstone, United States
Adriana Sirzea, Romania
Dariush Haghighi Talab, Islamic Republic of Iran
Peter Guldentops, SWIFT
Mike Doran - BPAWG Chair
Santiago Mila - IAPH/Spain, UN/CEFACT Vice Chair, Chair of the Promotion Group

Common acronyms:

BPAWG – Business Process Analysis Working Group	LWG – Legal Working Group
CDWG – Codes Working Group	TMWG – Techniques and Methodologies Working Group
EWG – UN/EDIFACT Working Group	Group
ITPWG – International Trade Procedures Working Group	SECI – Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
AFACT – Asia Pacific Council for the Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport	

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1. The Chair of the CSG welcomed the participants and introduced the main points to be discussed during the meeting. Among them were: (a) the press release on the UN/CEFACT 2000 Conference and the Plenary, (b) Recommendation No. 30, (c) UN/CEFACT 2000 Conference, (d) UN/CEFACT 2000 Plenary, (e) identity of UN/CEFACT, (f) promotion of UN/CEFACT, (g) Joint Syntax Working Group's resolution; (h) ebXML, (i) Memorandum of Understanding ISO-IEC-UN/ECE-ITU, (j) CSG membership, (k) UNTDED, (l) agenda for the May 2000 CSG meeting, and (m) meeting dates.

PRESS RELEASE

2. The meeting reviewed the issues that might be mentioned in the press release. The suggestions included the mission of UN/CEFACT in marrying trade facilitation and electronic business, role of delegations participating in the Plenary, expertise present in the working groups, development of tools for e-business, especially ebXML, cooperation with international organizations, including the MoU on electronic business, resolution in support of the WCO Kyoto Convention and the UN/CEFACT 2000 Conference. A small group of CSG members then met with the UN/ECE Press Officer in order to draft the press release.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 30

3. It was felt that for the success of the next submission of the Recommendation was the need to: (a) provide a convincing analysis of the business need that the Recommendation aimed to address; (b) show that the solution proposed was the best way of addressing that need, and (c) gather sufficient support from potential users in industry for the Recommendation.
4. The Vice Chair of the CDWG explained in detail the business need that had led to the drawing up of the Recommendation and provided clarifications on the size of differences between the Harmonized System and the code proposed in the Recommendation. The member from Sweden felt that the timetable suggested at the Plenary for the re-submission (end-2000) might be very tight, taking into account the complexity of the task, in particular as regards discussions with potential users with a view to ascertaining their support. She also offered that her country would contribute to the work on the Recommendation. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed again at the May CSG meeting after the CDWG had reviewed the issues in detail.

UN/CEFACT 2000 CONFERENCE

5. The discussion focused on: the evaluation of the conference and the lessons to be learned, and the preparation of the next Conference.
6. The secretariat reported on the results of the questionnaires distributed to the conference participants. It appeared that attendance was around 180 persons, i.e. 60 more as compared with last year. Ninety three per cent of the participants rated the Conference as very useful or useful. He also pointed out that a number of new delegations attending had increased, due to concerted marketing efforts in relation to missions in Geneva. However, CSG members generally felt that while attendance from the Geneva community was satisfactory, an earlier availability of the programme would have helped securing more participation from countries, in particular by representatives of

industry who were an important target group for the Conference. A concern was also expressed that tight security measures for access to United Nations premises did not facilitate open participation. On the other hand, UN/CEFACT is a UN body and there are considerable advantages of holding the meeting in the UN. On balance, it was decided that the Conference for 2001 would be held in the Palais des Nations.

7. The CSG members were of the view that a conference should also be organized next year. The issues to be addressed to make it a success included the following: (a) thorough consideration of the content of the conference, in particular the trade facilitation presentations; (b) early preparation of the programme and its wide publicizing; (c) possible hiring of a professional fundraising company for organizing sponsorship, and (d) setting up of a committee within the CSG to organize the conference.

UN/CEFACT 2000 PLENARY

8. The Chair of the CSG made the observation that the attendance at the Plenary in terms of the number of delegations was decreasing. The Head of the secretariat suggested that this phenomenon might be due to the fact that the dissemination of information, previously an important part of WP.4 meetings, was now taking place in the Conference. The Plenary should therefore focus more on discussions of strategic and policy issues. This view was also supported by other members of the CSG.

IDENTITY OF UN/CEFACT

9. The Chair of the CSG said that in the paper on the promotion of UN/CEFACT's objectives that had been submitted to the Plenary, he made the case for a separate and global identity for UN/CEFACT. He felt that the relationship between UN/CEFACT and the UN/ECE needed to be strengthened but in a way which supported UN/CEFACT's global mandate. The Head of the secretariat suggested that the formulation that best described this interrelationship was that UN/CEFACT was the only United Nations body responsible for trade facilitation and electronic business activities globally and this body was hosted by the UN/ECE. It was agreed that a verbal formula to describe this relationship in a public and consistent manner was required.

PROMOTION OF UN/CEFACT

10. The discussion concentrated on the idea of developing a Business Advisory Council for UN/CEFACT, its desirability and modalities of implementation. The Chair of the CSG pointed out that industry could be a powerful ally in promoting UN/CEFACT if its representatives communicated the message to Governments that industry perceived UN/CEFACT as useful. One way of gathering industry support behind UN/CEFACT might be the creation of a Business Advisory Council with honorary positions on it offered to major industry representatives. This might also open the way to sponsorship. The CSG members felt that before going public with the idea, a clear message for industry representatives should be formulated about the focus of UN/CEFACT's work. This might imply a need to strengthen and "re-package" the unique combination of trade facilitation and electronic business in UN/CEFACT's remit. The member from Belgium then underlined that before approaching industry representatives, it was indispensable to have clear terms of reference of the Business Advisory Council, as well as a clear statement of requirements that membership of the Council would entail for the potential candidate.

JOINT SYNTAX WORKING GROUP'S RESOLUTION

11. The Chair of the EWG informed the meeting about the resolution passed by the Joint Syntax Working Group (JSWG) which mainly implied a change in the procedure relating to entry points for Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) – these requests should from now on be sent direct to JSWG.

EBXML

12. The member from Belgium raised the issue of summary information for users regarding the developments in the ebXML initiative. The Chair of the CSG said that information could be found from a number of sources, such as the paper for the Plenary on the ebXML initiative, or presentations made during the Conference by the Chair and Vice Chair of the initiative. Another option would be to follow the ebXML web site where more than 700 people had registered up to this date.
13. The decisive issue to be solved now in the ebXML initiative was that of core components where three possible approaches existed based on UN/EDIFACT directory, Simple EDI and modelling. The decision needed to be taken quickly, very likely at the May ebXML meeting in Brussels. The Chair of the initiative expressed the view that the CSG should ensure that the solutions proposed by ebXML correspond to what had been developed in UN/CEFACT before.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

14. The Chair of the CSG welcomed the signature of the MoU by ITU as an important step forward in the efforts initiated three years ago. The member from Belgium raised the issue of the moratorium on ebXML activities and whether also the other members of the MoU adhered to it. A clarification was then provided that the moratorium was a unilateral act by UN/CEFACT, but that also the proposed activities of TC154 were in reality on a hold.

CSG MEMBERSHIP

15. The Chair of the CSG reported that he had received information that the current CSG member from Romania could no longer participate in the work of the CSG, and that he had been approached by the Romanian delegation with regard to the nomination of a person to replace her.

UNTDED

16. The user base for the UNTDED has not yet been contacted with regard to their opinion on the desirability of changes in the Directory. The Chair of the TMWG felt that since the position of the two main user groups, namely EDI and TDED, may diverge, it was up to UN/CEFACT to take a policy decision on the issue. The Chair of the CSG suggested that a summary policy paper be developed, to be sent to users with a view to seeking their opinions.

AGENDA FOR THE MAY 2000 CSG MEETING

17. The member from the World Customs Organization circulated a draft of the text for the MoU with the WCO. It was pointed out that a timely signature of the MoU would help in possible considerations by G-7 to withdraw themselves from trade facilitation activities and to transfer them to another organization, potentially UN/CEFACT and/or the WCO.
18. Discussions had been held with a representative of the Electronic Commerce Code Management Association with regard to the possibility of using their service for UN/CEFACT's work in the area of codes. A paper was being prepared by the ECCMA, which would be discussed at the coming May 2000 CSG meeting.
19. The member from Sweden informed about the proposals to enhance the UN/CEFACT web site. It had been suggested that there should be a merge between the UN/CEFACT and TRAFIX web sites and a discussion had taken place about the search engine.
20. The following items have been singled out for the agenda of the coming May 2000 CSG meeting: (a) ebXML initiative, (b) reports from mandated groups, (c) developments in standardization; (d) codes management, (e) UN/LOCODE, (f) MoU with the WCO and the WTO, (g) UN/CEFACT 2001 Conference, (h) promotion of UN/CEFACT's objectives, and (i) secretariat resources.

MEETING DATES

The following dates for CSG meeting have been agreed upon:

- 31 March 2000, Geneva
 - 22-25 May 2000, Geneva
 - 28-31 August 2000, Geneva
 - 20-23 November 2000, Barcelona
 - 30 March 2001, Geneva
 - 21-24 May 2001, venue to be announced
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