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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Matters arising since the seventeenth session

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Note by the secretariat, for information

Summary

The secretariat, together with the Bureau, will report on matters arising from both the Bureau of the Committee on Trade and the Executive Committee (EXCOM) since the seventeenth session.

This report is submitted to the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, for information.

1. Executive Committee

(a) Report to EXCOM

1. As requested by the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) at its meeting on 16 December 2010, the UN/CEFACT Bureau and the secretariat prepared a report on additional actions undertaken from December 2010 to October 2011 to implement EXCOM's recommendations. This report will be presented to the December 2011 session of EXCOM.

(b) Review of the 2005 UNECE Reform

2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, at its sixty-fourth session, in March 2011, recalled the UNECE reform adopted in December 2005, welcomed its implementation and achievements, and underlined the importance of its first five-year review that would take place in 2011-2012, with a view to drawing conclusions on the future work priorities of the UNECE. The Commission reaffirmed the strategic directions adopted by the 2005 UNECE reform, without prejudice to the outcome of the 2011-2012 review of that reform, which should make use of lessons learned and best practices.

3. The Commission requested EXCOM to consider the outputs of the discussion at that session when it reviews the work programmes of its sectoral committees. It also similarly requested the sectoral committees to consider these outputs.

4. At its 41st meeting, on 10 May 2011, EXCOM approved the modalities of the 2011-2012 review of the 2005 UNECE Reform (document No. 2011/5). The review will solicit inputs from the chairs of sectoral committees and the secretariat.

5. EXCOM will formally review each committee during 2011 and 2012. The review of the UNECE Committee on Trade is scheduled for 18 and 19 June 2012. In a first step, EXCOM will review the current mandates of the Committees and their subsidiary bodies; the extent to which these mandates have been carried out over the past years in a resource-efficient way; and their added value vis-à-vis activities being carried out by other UN bodies or international organizations. The purpose will be to identify within each subprogramme:

- Priority areas of current work and results achieved.
- Possible new and emerging issues and expected results.
- Possibilities for streamlining and synergizing activities within each of the expected results.
- Ways of improving efficiency and methods of work.
- Expected results and related activities that may need to be reoriented/refocused to better reflect priority demands of member States.
- Possible optimization of the structure of the programme of work.
- Ways of improving communication and public outreach.

6. In a second step, EXCOM will consider possible future work priorities and the desirable and projected outputs in each area. This exercise may determine the activities that need to be enhanced and those that should be discontinued in order to better reflect the evolving needs and priorities of member States. Careful consideration will be given to the comparative advantages, cooperation and synergies, relevance to the mandate, efficacy, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the work.

2. Committee on Trade

7. At its fourth session, in June 2011, the Committee on Trade discussed the work that UN/CEFACT had undertaken since the third session, in February 2009, and made the following decisions:

(a) The Committee took note of the revision of UN/CEFACT's structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures (document ECE/TRADE/C/2009/15/Rev.2) and agreed to consider it under an intersessional process after receiving the assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed restructuring referred to in paragraph 29 of the report of the 2010 UN/CEFACT Plenary session (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/25). *(Note: This report is currently under development and will be presented to the 18th UN/CEFACT session in February 2012 in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2012/9 "Overview and Rationale for the new structure of UN/CEFACT".)*

(b) The Committee noted that EXCOM had asked the secretariat to take on the leading role in capacity-building activities and efforts to increase the involvement of countries with economies in transition in its work.

(c) The Committee requested the secretariat to respond directly to enquiries from member States to the greatest extent possible.

8. At its meeting on 6 October, the Bureau of the Committee on Trade made the following decision:

(a) The Bureau decided to develop new guidelines for chairpersons, which would feature, among other things, a note to chairpersons explaining their role and the UNECE and CT procedures including format and structure of Plenary documents. The Bureau also requested that the secretariat should make sure that existing rules of procedures are followed by all bodies.

3. Capacity-building and Support to Enhance the Participation of Transition Economies in the Work of UN/CEFACT¹

(a) Capacity-building

9. A summary of the capacity-building activities undertaken by the secretariat to implement EXCOM recommendations on capacity-building in trade facilitation and the use of international standards is included in a document that was presented to the EXCOM on 29 November 2011.

10. Some recent highlights of the secretariat's capacity-building programme include:

- a Regional Training Workshop on Business Process Analysis for Paperless Trade and Single Window Implementation, 20-22 April 2011, Bangkok.

¹ As the new UN/CEFACT organizational arrangements mature over the coming months, priority is also being given by the UN/CEFACT Bureau and the UNECE secretariat towards closer collaboration, particularly to benefit member States through a strengthened programme of outreach and capacity-building that can take advantage of the combined knowledge and competencies of UN/CEFACT experts from the public and private sectors and the UNECE secretariat.

- UNNExT Training on Business Process Analysis for Paperless Trade and Single Window System for Kazakhstan/Central Asia in Astana, 27-28 June 2011.
- UNNExT Capacity Building Workshop on Addressing Legal Issues for Single Window Implementation and Paperless Trade, 7-8 October 2011, Seoul.
- UNNExT Capacity Building Workshop on Data Harmonization for Single Window Environment, 7-8 October 2011, Seoul.
- Regional breakout meeting of Central Asian Countries Asia-Pacific on the Trade Facilitation Forum 2011, 4-5 October 2011, Seoul.
- Single Window Project Planning and Implementation, 14-15 December 2011, Geneva, Switzerland.

11. The secretariat further developed and extended the United Nations Network of Experts for Central Asia and Asian Pacific Countries (UNNExT). In the UNECE region, the following countries now participate in the network: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In addition, Afghanistan and Mongolia participate in their role as SPECA countries. The Network is jointly operated by the UNECE and UNESCAP trade divisions.

12. Highlights of secretariat briefing papers for policy makers developed under UNNExT include:

- UNNExT Brief No. 5, Towards a Single Window Trading Environment – Senegal's Transition from a Paper-based System to a Paperless Trading System, January 2011.
- UNNExT Brief No. 6, Towards a Single Window Trading Environment – Japan's Development of a Single Window - Case of NACCS, April 2011.
- UNNExT Brief No. 7, Towards a Single Window Trading Environment – Achieving Effective Stakeholder Coordination, September 2011.
- UNNExT Guide on Data Harmonization for Single Window: A guide for developing countries and transition economies to analyse and simplify trade documents and to develop electronic trade documents using open international standards.
- UNNExT Country studies on Data Harmonization for Single Window: National case studies of how countries conduct data harmonization and development of electronic trade documents for Single Window; currently available studies from Thailand and the Republic of Korea.
- UNNExT Guide on Legal Issues related to Single Window Implementation;
- UNNExT Guide for Single Window Planning and implementation management.

13. Based on the success of the recent collaboration between UNECE and ESCAP and other United Nations regional commissions over the past years, in 2010 all five executive secretaries launched the joint regional-commission approach to trade facilitation, to provide a unified voice for and approach. In support of this initiative, UNECE submitted and received approval for a UN Development Account (UNDA) project to assist developing and transition economies from all five regions to participate more effectively in global supply chains. The first event under this project "Connecting International Trade: Single Windows and Supply Chains in the Next Decade" will take place in Geneva in December 2011. The meeting will look at the latest trends, opportunities and technologies for Single Window and information exchange in global trade in order to identify the most efficient strategies, business models and policy approaches. The event will support the development of strategic priorities for more efficient and secure cross-border trade, in line with the

ongoing WTO negotiations in the Doha round and allow the participants to share experience and lessons learned. The Conference will be followed by capacity-building events on Single Window management and data harmonization.

14. The UN/CEFACT Bureau will be invited to participate. The secretariat will continue to inform the Bureau on a regular basis of these actions and outcomes, with a view to identifying areas where the Bureau can take action.

15. During 2011, UNECE, with the support of UN/CEFACT experts, re-launched the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide project, which is funded by the Swedish Development Agency (Sida). By June 2012, the project is expected to deliver an e-Guide to the instruments and tools for trade-facilitation implementation, completed by a set of training materials and a number of case stories on good practices.

(b) Enhanced participation of Economies in Transition in the work of UN/CEFACT

16. Particular attention was focused on encouraging the participation of economies in transition. Positive developments in this area include:

- The regional meeting in Belarus in April 2011, where the Ministries of Communication of 11 CIS countries nominated a Regional Commonwealth for Communication group to work with UN/CEFACT.
- The request to UN/CEFACT from the CIS Interstate Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification (which unites standardization bodies of eleven CIS states), at their meeting in Turkmenistan in May 2011, for assistance in preparing proposals for a potential regional standardization programme on information standards based on UN/CEFACT tools.
- The provision by UNECE of a series of training courses in trade facilitation at the OSCE Border Management College (Dushanbe).

17. As the result of the e-standards awareness initiatives of the UNECE secretariat, a new technical committee TC 22 "information technologies" was established in the Russian Federation in December 2009. During 2010, it received a status of an intra-state CIS technical committee with the same title.

18. In 2010 the Russian Technical Committee on e-standards (TC55) was established. This committee focuses on "Terminology, data elements and documentation in business process and electronic trade".

19. The UNECE secretariat has also established contacts with key CIS organizations dealing with information standards at a regional level. These include the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RC) and the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification. Both organizations represent national sectoral governmental bodies, ministries of communications and standards agencies of the 11 CIS member States.

20. For the moment, the secretariat provides these national and regional bodies with information, as appropriate. The secretariat recommends that UN/CEFACT engage in further contacts with these standard-setting bodies.