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Meeting with the Chair of the Steering Committee Trade Capacity and Standards

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

This report outlines the main achievements of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) in implementing the Programme of work 2016-2017, as well as key developments related to the work of the SCTCS through September 2017. More information is contained in the report of the 3rd session, which was held on 12-13 April 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland - document ECE/CTCS/2017/2.

I. Achievements since the last session

Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade

1. Since the last session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) in April 2017, and at the request of the Steering Committee, UNECE has expanded the scope of the evaluation methodology used in its studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade to capture the impact of non-tariff measures on the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) 8 and 9. The expanded methodology is applied for two national assessment studies in Armenia and Georgia, which were launched during the second half of 2017 at the request of the two Governments.

2. During the last session, member States requested support in achieving the 2030 SDGs. To ensure policy responsiveness, the Chair is in the process of reviewing the activities under the SCTCS in terms of their consistency with the level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

Promoting agricultural quality standards

3. The Working Party adopted 22 new or revised standards in 2016, and will consider 20 new or revised standards for adoption at its 2017 meeting. In addition, it published the UNECE guides: Seed Potato Tuber Inspection; Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service; the Explanatory Brochures for Persimmons and for Walnut Kernels and an Explanatory Poster for Dried Apricots.

4. The following meetings of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and its four Specialized Sections were held since September 2016:

- WP.7 annual session, 9 - 11 November 2016, including a Conference on Food Loss “no time to lose on food loss” co-organized with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on 10 November 2016; Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (2 - 5 May 2017);
- Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce (5 - 7 July 2017);
- Specialized Section on Meat (29 - 31 August 2016), back-to-back with the third meat seminar on trends in meat markets and standards (29 August 2016) and a rapporteurs meeting on duck meat (19-20 September 2017). The upcoming Specialized Section on Meat is scheduled for 6 November 2017;
- Specialized Section on Seed Potatoes, 29 - 31 March 2017) with a technical meeting in the Netherlands.

5. Participation in the meetings of the Working Party and its Specialized Sections has further increased over the past year. The number of participants in the Working Party has tripled and participation in the capacity-building events has grown substantially. Since 2012, UNECE and its WP.7 partners have trained over 1,800 participants in the use and scope of UNECE standards and related inspection and trade procedures.

6. Member States participating in the work on agricultural quality standards have also initiated new work on crosscutting areas such as eating quality, food waste, traceability and work on the SDGs, where such work can add value and guidance to the work on the standards.

7. All Specialized Sections have mapped their work against the SDGs, particularly:

- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;

And to a lesser degree,

- SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

8. Further information on the activities and accomplishments of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards can be found in the WP.7 report on UNECE's website (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2016/2).

Promoting regulatory cooperation and internationally agreed standards

9. UNECE's work on regulatory cooperation and standardization policies focuses on five areas:

(a) **Forum for dialogue** to enable and empower Governments, standards organizations and UN partners to discuss and identify best regulatory approaches and best practices in the use of standards in support of the public good, in particular the implementation of UN frameworks, including the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Action**. Under this priority, the UNECE WP.6 has launched for discussion a new initiative on “**Gender-responsive standards**”. The initiative aims at increasing the participation of women in standards and standards-related activities, and ensuring that standards are responsive to women’s needs.

(b) **Regulatory cooperation** to engage member States in national, regional and international efforts to remove technical barriers to trade in specific sectors. The ad hoc team of specialists on Standardization And Regulatory Techniques (START) Team revised the UNECE's Recommendation L on the International Model for Technical Harmonization Based on Good Regulatory Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Technical Regulations via the Use of International Standards in 2015. In 2016, the Working Party adopted **two new recommendations** on conformity assessment: G on Acceptance of Conformity Assessment Results; and F on the Creation and Promotion of International Agreements on Conformity Assessment, prepared by the START Team.

(c) WP.6 also contributes to **regional and international efforts for regulatory cooperation**. It participates in a project by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) aimed at a better understanding of the contribution of International Organizations to better rules of globalization. Under this umbrella, the WP. 6 Secretariat authored and published **a case study of regulatory cooperation** activities in UNECE. https://www.ECE.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/RegulatoryCooperation/EC_E_Full_Report.pdf.

(d) The WP.6 secretariat has started consultations on how to use regulatory cooperation to bridge **fragmentation** between private standards, which represents an important barrier to trade, particularly for small and medium enterprises from developing and transition economies. The secretariat has partnered with conformity assessment bodies and other international organizations to use the potential of national and international platforms to minimize the costs of complying with diverse private standards requirements.

(e) **Market surveillance** to support member States' efforts in fighting the proliferation of counterfeit and non-compliant goods on the markets. The Advisory Group

on Market Surveillance (MARS Group) held its meeting in Stockholm in September 2017. At the 2016 Session of the WP. 6. **A new recommendation** was adopted on product-based surveillance activities in collaboration with the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM Group).

(f) **Risk Management in Regulatory Frameworks** for safer and more resilient communities and eco-systems. It held a meeting in Germany, which discussed the use of risk management tools within **regulatory frameworks in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular SDG 14 “Life under water” as a pilot study.

(g) **Education on standards-related issues** to bring a toolbox of standards to Universities and professional education programmes in order to promote best practice. To **support** this objective, WP.6 participates in cooperation work with ISO/IEC/ITU and with the University of Geneva. It also maintains a database on education-related initiatives.

II. Major activities planned for the coming year and beyond

10. The secretariat is preparing to undertake further studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, based on requests from member States. Below is a brief description of the planned activities by WP.6 and WP.7. Further details can be found in document ECE/CTCS/2017/9 “Status of implementation of the 2016-2017 programme of work”.

UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

11. A proposal for reorienting the UNECE work on standardization more strongly towards Agenda 2030 by changing the name of WP.6 to “Standards and Regulations for Sustainable Development” will be discussed at the WP.6 annual session, scheduled to be held on 28-30 November 2017

12. The secretariat would like to explore the member States’ interest in, and possible support of, organizing a side event back-to-back with the General Assembly of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in September 2018. The ISO General Assembly will gather about 600 senior representatives of standardization bodies from all over the world. The organization of a first-ever UN side event would aim at showing how standards have been used and can be used to achieve the goals of the 2030 Development Agenda. It would promote wide cooperation among Geneva based standards organizations and UN Agencies in the spirit of “Genève Internationale”.

UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

13. WP.7 will hold its seventy-third session on 7-8 November 2017 in Geneva featuring the second conference on sustainable food production and consumption (“Rooting for Sustainable Food”) organized together with FAO on 7 November 2017, to discuss the links and potential contribution of agricultural quality standards to Sustainable Development Goal number 12. Six additional meetings will be organized:

- Specialised Section on Seed potatoes: 31 August-2 September 2016 and 29-31 March 2017;
- Specialised Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables: 2-5 May 2017;
- Specialised Section on Dry and Dried Produce: 19-21 June 2017;
- Specialised Section on Meat: 5-7 July 2017;
- Working Party 7 annual session: 6-8 November 2017.

14. In addition, the secretariat is working with experts to finalize new explanatory posters to facilitate capacity-building and export possibilities for UNECE member States.

III. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

15. No changes are currently foreseen.

IV. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

16. UNECE's Trade Sub-programme is actively involved in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs' (ECESA) "Trade Cluster", and the United Nations Inter-Agency cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity. The clusters led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) facilitate coordination on trade and productive capacity within the UN.

Agricultural Quality Standards and Trade Facilitation

17. UNECE's WP.7 secretariat is actively collaborating with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in implementing a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on "Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains."

IV. Technical cooperation activities

18. This chapter provides updates on the secretariat's report on "capacity-building and technical assistance activities" (ECE/CTCS/2017/7). Further details can also be found in document ECE/CTCS/2017/8 "Cooperation with other ECE bodies and other organizations".

Agricultural supply chains

19. UNECE is leading a UNDA-financed project entitled "Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains" with ESCAP, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FAO, Codex Alimentarius Commission and bilateral donor agencies (with contributions in kind).

20. The project, which will come to an end by January 2018, enhances understanding and increased capacity among public and private sector stakeholders on how to apply agricultural standards and best practices for efficient regulation, improved information exchange, and quality control, including national and sectoral strategies.

21. The targeted countries were selected following a demand-driven approach, with a priority given to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in these sub-regions. The selected countries from the UNECE region include:

- Western Balkan countries: Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as UNMIK/Kosovo¹;
- Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

¹ S/RES/1244(1999)

22. Activities in 2017 included workshops on:
- Fresh fruit and vegetables trade held in Thessaloniki, Greece (March 2017) for the Balkan countries; and for the Central Asian region in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (July 2017);
 - a cross-regional event for Central Asia and Asia on cross-border trade and eating quality was held in Dublin, Ireland on 10-11 August 2017 (in conjunction with the International Congress for meat science) ;
 - Meat trade and electronic certification with UNECE expert trainers for Asian participants, (jointly with ESCAP).
23. The workshop in Tashkent, the second of its kind, was organized together with UNDP and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to ensure synergies, and increase outreach and on-the-ground impact. As a result, local partners and aid agencies apply the training and help foster the adoption and use of UNECE standards with the aim to gradually pool productions cross-border for improved joint export potential and competitiveness.
24. In addition, as a result of this project, other UN and non-UN organizations and donors have started to work regularly with Working Party 7. These include particularly UNDP, (FAO, Asian Development Bank (ADB), GIZ, and Hilfswerk Austria, thanks to which the sustainability of the project's results has been secured.

Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan

25. A technical cooperation project on “Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan” was approved in June 2006 by EXCOM as follow up to the UNECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the country.
26. As a result, training materials on risk management in regulatory systems, conformity assessment and market surveillance were produced. Planned activities include the translation and publication of training materials, organization of a train-the-trainer course and five awareness-raising training workshops in Kyrgyzstan.

Follow-up on completed studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade

27. The recommendations of the UNECE study in the Republic of Moldova were formally adopted by the Government as part of the country's action plan for implementing the commitments under the World Trade organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation. UNECE is currently assisting the Government of the Republic of Moldova in mobilizing resources and partnerships for implementing the recommendations emerging from the study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
28. UNECE is also supporting the establishment of national trade facilitation committees in Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova within the context of project led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (). An extra-budgetary project “Removing Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan” was launched in late 2016. The project seeks to assist Belarus in implementing priority recommendations emerging from the study. For Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, activities are carried out in cooperation with UNCTAD and are focused on improving the classification of trade-related measures using the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) non-tariff measures (NTM) classification system.
29. In October 2017, the secretariat embarked on implementing a technical assistance project to assist Tajikistan in equipping the members of the recently established national trade facilitation committee with the required skills. The secretariat will also analyse the implications of the regulatory and procedural barriers, identified in the UNECE assessment study on regional cooperation.

V. Cooperation with other organizations

30. In addition to the cooperation highlighted in the previous sections, the Steering Committee cooperates with a number of partner organizations. Below is a brief description of UNECE's cooperation with these organizations. Further details can be found in document ECE/CTCS/2017/8 "Cooperation with other UNECE bodies and other organizations".

World Trade Organization

31. Through WP.6, the UNECE is a permanent observer at the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). WP.6 participates in all the meetings of the WTO TBT and provides the TBT Committee members with updates on its activities and the emerging needs of UNECE member States with transition and developing economies.

Standardization Organizations

32. WP.6 collaborates closely with relevant organizations within the context of its "sectoral initiatives", which advance practical ways to support across-the-board as well as sector-specific regulatory cooperation. In this context, the Working Party has established a partnership with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and its System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres (IECEX).

33. Cooperation has continued with relevant ISO Technical Committees to support sectoral initiatives. The Chairperson of ISO/TC 127 is the coordinator of the Sectoral Initiative on Earthmoving Equipment.

34. Since 2010, the Working Party has been an active member of the Network on Metrology, Accreditation and Standardization for Developing Countries (DCMAS).

Metrology and other areas of Standards, Quality and Metrology infrastructure

35. The *Bureau International des Poids et Mesures* (BIPM) participates actively in the meetings of the WP. 6, and is evaluating a possible use of the Recommendation L in the field of legal metrology. Since 2010, the Working Party has been a member of the Network on Metrology, Accreditation and Standardization for Developing Countries (DCMAS), which includes the following organizations: Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), International Committee of Weights and Measures (CIPM), International Accreditation Forum (IAF), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC), International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), International Committee for Legal Metrology (CIML), ISO, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Partnerships with regional organizations in regulatory cooperation and standardization policies

EASC and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

36. The International Model on Regulatory Harmonization, a set of tools developed by UNECE to help regional trading blocs approximate their regulatory policies, is used extensively by the CIS in their regulatory cooperation efforts, which are led by the Interstate Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification (EASC).

The Eurasian Customs Union

37. The Eurasian Customs Union (CU) used WP.6 "Recommendation L" as a basis for developing common technical regulations. Representatives of the CU regularly report on the progress of the implementation of their common regulatory work to the meetings of the

MARS Group and to the WP.6 Annual Session. Currently, the WP.6 Vice Chair is the Minister of Technical Regulations of the Customs Union.

38. A representative of the UNECE WP.6 secretariat also attends the Annual Meetings of the EASC – the Interstate Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of the Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS).

The European Commission

39. The European Commission (EC) continued to support UNECE activities in the areas of standardization policies and regulatory cooperation. The Commission also continues to participate in UNECE activities related to market surveillance and inspections, where UNECE has become the platform for the exchange of expertise between the EU and other member states. Finally, the European Commission is an active partner in the work of the newly established Group of Experts on risk management in regulatory framework.

40. The European Union Technical Barriers to Trade (EU TBT ACP) has recently agreed on the implementation of the GRM methodology on “Risk management in regulatory frameworks in the sector of fisheries”. The African Regional Standardization Organization (ARSO) has proposed Namibia and Uganda as pilot countries for developing tools for cooperation between customs and enforcement authorities.

Partnerships in the area of agricultural quality standards

41. WP.7 works closely with the European Commission and the Council of the European Union to maintain the complete harmonization of marketing standards with UNECE standards.

42. It cooperates with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables to facilitate the common interpretation of UNECE standards and their application in international trade.

43. It cooperates with the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as well as the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables in developing new and maintaining existing commercial quality standards and coordinating and harmonizing the work.

44. Cooperation has also taken place with FAO in the organization of the exhibition on Pulses and the conference on food loss and standards; UNDP and GIZ in capacity building in Central Asia; and, with the International Trade Centre (ITC) to include UNECE’s standards in the ITC Standards Map as well as through the provision of UNECE training materials on ITC’s Sustainability Xchange online platform.

Partnerships related to the Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade

45. UNECE cooperates closely with international and regional organizations in designing action-oriented recommendations for removing regulatory and procedural trade barriers identified through the studies. Representatives from OIML and IEC contributed to the inter-governmental discussions on removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Republic of Moldova, which were held in April 2017 during the Steering Committee’s High-Level Segment. UNECE also works closely with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) to ensure complementarity, with representatives from this body participating in the SCTCS annual sessions.

46. In addition, UNECE is working closely with UN Country Teams to integrate the recommendations of the trade needs assessment studies into national UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).