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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

Note by the secretariat

This document describes the operational activities undertaken, within the regular budget, in support of the work programme of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development between June 1999 and June 2000. These activities have been organized into three groups: (a) activities in support of Trade Facilitation, (b) activities in support of Trade and Investment Promotion, and (c) activities in support of Enterprise Development.

Operational activities undertaken with extrabudgetary funding are described in document TRADE/2000/12, "Extrabudgetary Activities in Support of the Work Programme."

I. ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF TRADE FACILITATION

1. Seminar on Administrative issues at Customs Check Points and their Impact on the Development of Inter-Arab State Trade

(Cairo, 25-27 September 1999)

The purpose of the seminar was to examine the prerequisites to develop a free trade area among the Arab States. Mr. Hans A. Hansell participated and gave three lectures on electronic commerce, trade facilitation and the UN/ECE conventions related to road transport.

2. Seminar on electronic commerce in emerging countries - issues and development policies

(Marrakech, 11-12 November 1999)

This Seminar was organized jointly by the University of Toulouse 1 and Cadi-Ayyad of Marrakech with the cooperation of the "Federation des Chambres de Commerce d'Industries et de Service Marocaines".

3. High-level ESCWA Expert Group Meeting on trade and infrastructure

(Beirut, 16-18 November 1999)

The secretariat gave a presentation on modern trade and electronic commerce at this meeting. In the context of cooperation with other regional commissions and support for the Mediterranean region, the secretariat has provided support to a number of meetings related to trade facilitation organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) during the past year, including this one.

4. Lectures on international standardization of perishable produce

(Mojmirovce, Slovakia, 21-25 June 1999 and 30 August to 3 September 1999 and Beirut, 27-29 April 2000)

During 1999 the secretariat was invited to give lectures at several training courses for growers, exporters and quality inspectors as well as at an expert group meeting in Beirut. These presentations focussed on the application of UN/ECE standards as a means of trade facilitation and market development.

5. Support For The Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

Substantial support was given to SECI activities throughout the year and required participation at the following meetings, consultations and activities:

- **SECI Business Advisory Council meeting**
(Rome, 10-12 March 1999)
- **SECIPRO and SECI Business Advisory Council meeting**
(Rome, 11 and 12 March 1999)
- **Assistance to the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the re-establishment of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (ALBAPRO)**
(Tirana, 22 and 23 March 1999)

- **SECI Project Group on Crime and Corruption**
(Bucharest, 21-23 April 1999)
- **SECI Business Advisory Council meetings**
(Vienna, 5-8 May 1999)
- **SECI Charter for Regional Cooperation to Combat Crime and Corruption**
(Bucharest, 25 and 26 May 1999)
- **Meeting of SECIPRO and EUROPRO**
(Vienna, 26-28 May 1999)
- **SECI Project Group Meeting on “Cooperation among Securities Markets”**
(Istanbul, Turkey, 11-13 July 1999)
- **SECI joint Cooperation Committee for Combating Trans-Border Crime**
(Athens, 20-23 July 1999)
- **SECI/OSCE Coordination Meeting**
(Salzburg, Austria, 25-28 July 1999)
- **Preparatory Meeting of the SECI Joint Cooperation Committee**
(Bucharest, 15-18 September 1999)
- **SECI Trilateral Trade Facilitation meeting**
(Thessaloniki, Greece, 20-21 September 1999)
- **SECI/ECE Conference on Priorities for the EU Stability Pact**
(Vienna, 2-4 October 1999)
- **UN convention of the Transition Crime Ad Hoc Group meeting**
(Vienna, 5-7 October 1999)
- **SECIPRO and SECI Business Advisory Council meetings**
(Bled, Slovenia, 20-23 October 1999)
- **Meetings with European Investment Bank and World Bank on the Stability Pact and SECI Project**
(Brussels, 25-27 October 1999)
- **SECI Business Advisory Council and SECIPRO meetings**
(Budapest, 12-14 December 1999)

6. Other Activities in Support of Trade Facilitation

In addition to the above activities, the Regional Advisor participated in a number of other meetings and activities designed to support trade facilitation in the UN/ECE region. These include the following:

- **Thessaloniki Forum Conference**
(Thessaloniki, Greece, 9-11 May 1999)
- **Assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations to establish a national Trade Facilitation Committee**
(Ljubljana, 29 June – 1 July 1999)
- **Seminar on the cooperation of SMEs with transitional corporations**
(Baku, 30 September 1999)
- **EU Stability Pact Working Table II**
(Bari, Italy, 8 and 9 October 1999)
- **Stability Pact Conference**
(Alpbach, Austria, 10-12 October 1999)
- **FITPRO Trade Facilitation workshop**
(Prague, 12-16 October 1999)
- **PWG Session of the SPECA Project on Development of Transport Infrastructure and Cross-Border Facilitation**
(Almaty, 17-19 October 1999)
- **Rebuilding Southeast Europe Economic and Business Summit**
(Thessaloniki, Greece, 31 October – 3 November 1999)
- **Initial Trade Facilitation Review for the Government of Malta**
(Valetta, 14-17 November 1999)
- **Joint Albania – The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Workshop on Investment Barriers**
(Skopje, 19-21 November 1999)
- **WTO Ministerial Meeting**
(Seattle, United States of America, 28 November – 2 December 1999)

II. ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION

7. Negotiating Platform for Public-Private Partnerships in Infrastructure

Bagalore, Bangladesh, October 1999 and February 2000

The UN/ECE BOT Group, together with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), has held two meetings with the Bangladesh Office for Investment (BOI) and various high level members of the Government of Bangladesh. The experts saw strong government commitment for public-private partnerships (PPPs). However, to bring projects to realization, the members of the team argued that it was necessary to improve the legal and regulatory framework for BOTs and PPPs; and build the capability within the public administration in negotiating PPP contracts. As a result, with financial assistance from ESCAP, the BOT group has prepared a negotiating platform document which is designed to assist and eventually train officials in negotiating concession contracts. The group will now use these materials for training in the UN/ECE region.

8. Implementing Public-Private Partnerships in South East Europe

(Sofia, 4 November 1999)

In cooperation with the Bulgarian Foreign Investment Agency, the BOT Group organised a roundtable on the above topic as part of the South East Europe Economic Forum's annual meeting. Bulgaria has taken a lead in promoting the private financing of infrastructure projects and has been active in promoting co-operation between countries on infrastructure projects. Experts agreed that efforts were needed regionally to remove barriers to private investment in infrastructure, one of which was a lack of detailed knowledge on complex contractual issues amongst civil servants. It was accordingly agreed to follow-up the event at a regional level with a training programme for the Investment Promotion Agencies of the Southeast region using materials prepared by the UN/ECE BOT Group and in cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank.

9. Forum on "New Trends in Competition Law and their Implications for Business in the Transition Economies"

(Brno, Czech Republic, 29-30 November 1999)

The Forum was held in connection with the 1999 session of the Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice and in cooperation with the Competition Office and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. Experts from the anti-Monopoly and Competition Offices of UN/ECE member States and from the private sector participated in this event. They approved a set of best practices for improving the implementation of competition policy on issues related to, *inter alia*, mergers and acquisitions, State aids, harmonization of legislation with the European Union (EU), and public procurement, and agreed that regular dialogue between the government authorities and the private sector was required. They further recommended that a similar event be held annually, in co-operation with other international organizations, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and with the European Union, in order to measure progress, identify problems and promote cooperation among competition authorities in the region.

10. Private/Public Partnerships to Support Infrastructure Development (Belarus, Poland and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS))

As a result of contacts with the UN/ECE advisory group on Build-Operate-Transfer projects (the BOT group), the Government of Belarus decided to establish (by decision of the Prime Minister) a special group on BOT (the first in the CIS). This group is now working with the UN/ECE BOT Group on a project for a customs terminal the purpose of which is to eliminate bottlenecks at the Polish-Belarusian border and thus facilitate transport links and trade between western Europe and the CIS. The CIS secretariat has also expressed their interest in this project as a potential model for other similar projects in the CIS.

11. Institution building in Support of Arbitration in Southeast Europe (Vienna, 17-18 February 2000)

The secretariat is providing support to the arbitration project of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). The objective of this project is to strengthen the commercial dispute resolution capacities and institutions in that region. This meeting of the UN/ECE Advisory Group on International Commercial Arbitration included a half day dedicated to the discussion of support for the SECI project. The Advisory Group has agreed to provide input to and review the guidelines and evaluation framework which are planned outputs from the SECI project.

12. Real Estate Markets and Trade Promotion (Geneva, Switzerland, 2-3 March 2000)

A seminar to which local authorities from transition economies were invited was jointly organized with FEDRE (the Foundation for the Economy and sustainable Development of the Regions of Europe). The seminar was titled, "Trade and Investment Promotion from a Local and Regional Perspective" and emphasized the role of local authorities in the development of effective real estate markets and an investment friendly environment.

13. Intellectual Property Rights Country Support: Pilot Project (Estonia) (Tallinn, 6-7 April 2000)

In December 1999, the UN/ECE Advisory Group on the Protection and Implementation of Intellectual Property Rights for Investment began an Estonian support project. The objective of this project is to facilitate the sustainable enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in Estonia and to create a climate favourable to indigenous technological development, and foreign and local investment. This is a pilot project for what is hoped will be a series of similar projects in central and eastern Europe.

14. To implement its objectives, the Advisory Group has:

- produced a report on the status of intellectual property protection in Estonia;
- held consultations with high level Government officials concerned in April 2000;
- meet jointly with Estonian experts to draw up recommendations for the Estonian Government;

15. The final report and recommendations should be finalized by summer 2000 and will include the identification of appropriate training for Estonian enforcement officials. Resources permitting, and subject to agreement by the Estonian government, the UN/ECE will publish the background note for the visit, its final report and the recommendations.

16. In the future, if so desired by the Estonian Government, the Advisory Group will undertake a review of the implementation of its recommendations in the future.

17. All of the above activities have taken, or will take place in close cooperation with interested parties in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) secretariats as well as other international organizations active in this area.

18. Practical Aspects of Eliminating Obstacles to Efficient Trade Finance in Transition Economies

(Riga, 26-27 May 2000)

This seminar was intended to: identify barriers to the unobstructed financing of trade in transition economies; identify practical solutions to existing problems, including new export finance schemes; and produce recommendations for governmental bodies concerned. The seminar was developed in collaboration with the private sector and, in particular, the Riga-based Baltic Transit Bank which co-sponsored the event.

19. Sustainable Implementation of Intellectual Property Rights in Poland

(Warsaw, 12 June 2000)

The objective of the above meeting will be to summarize IPR enforcement in Poland and identify the training requirements of government officials (Customs, police, Ministries of Justice and Culture, etc.) and of private sector IPR users (lawyers, patent/trade mark agents, investigators). Efforts will also be made to identify the appropriate trainers and available funding sources in order to develop a collective training programme involving both enforcement agencies and the private sector.

20. Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policy

In October 1999 the UN/ECE secretariat took part in the CIS meeting of standardization agencies in Armenia to present the UN/ECE's work on technical harmonization and standardization policy and explain its relevance for CIS countries. In part as a result of this meeting, in November 1999 the secretariat of the Council of Independent States (CIS) Interstate Council on Standardization, Certification and Metrology (Minsk) asked the UN/ECE's assistance in organizing a CIS Quality Centre to be based in the current CIS Information Centre on Standards. This proposal is being further developed for external funding by the Regional Adviser for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and, if funding is obtained, will be supported by the UN/ECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies.

21. Workshop on ISO 14000 environmental management system (EMS) standards in the chemical industry

(Budapest, 28-29 March 2000)

This Workshop was jointly organized by the UN/ECE Ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry and the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies in

cooperation with, and at invitation of, the Government of Hungary. Some 70 participants from 18 countries took part in the event, which was designed to use the chemical industry as a model for introducing ISO 14000 and its related EMS standards to countries in transition.

III. ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

22. Seminar on Analysis, Methodology of Treatment and Remediation of Contaminated Soils

(Paris, 13-15 April 1999)

This second Seminar on the subject, which was proposed to the ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry and supported by the Government of France, attracted over 600 participants and 80 papers from over 30 countries. A call was made for a third Seminar, which will be held 13-15 March 2001 in Paris.

23. The chemical industry

The secretariat provided expert input to several conferences held under the auspices of other bodies in Belarus (**Europe is Our Common Home: Ecological Aspects**), Bashkortostan (Russian Federation) (**Business Round Table on Chemical Industry Investments**), the United Kingdom (**Financial Times Petrochemical Conference**) and Poland (**Contaminated Land Remediation in Eastern and Central Europe**).

24. Workshop on Radioactive Contaminated Metallurgical Scrap

(Prague, 26-28 May 1999)

The Workshop was attended by 180 participants from 28 countries and several international organizations. Twenty-eight papers were presented from seventeen countries. The delegations recommended that a Team of Specialists should be created for the steel industry, government representatives and qualified organizations to consult each other and propose solutions acceptable at the international level to harmonize the legislation, the systems of measurement, the levels of investigation concerning radioactivity of metallurgical scrap and draw up codes of practice/conduct in the area. The first meeting of the Team of Specialists was held in Geneva on 28 October 1999. The meeting decided upon the general objectives of the Team of Specialists, the creation of a restricted drafting group and an action plan. The second meeting of the Team is envisaged for June 2000.

25. Seminar on Competitiveness in Industry: Trends in Steel Consumption-Responding to Market Needs

(Budapest, 11-12 September 1999)

26. The secretariat also provided significant support to the following meetings and related follow-up activities, although the principal organizer was the Regional Advisor on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises:

- **Expert Meeting on Best Practice in Business Incubation**

(Geneva, Switzerland, 3-4 June 1999)

The meeting, organized at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, was attended by more than 100 SME policy makers and experts from 27 countries and several international organizations. Eight papers were presented on best practice in business incubation in

advanced market economies and twenty on business incubation in transition economies and other countries. Based on the recommendation of the meeting, the Secretariat of the UN/ECE prepared Best Practice Guidelines on Business Incubation. The work was carried out in a virtual ad hoc group of Experts through the Internet. The guidelines are available in English and Russian (ECE/TRADE/253).

- **Conference on Women's Entrepreneurship - East-West Cooperation**

(Brijuni, Croatia, 21-22 October 1999)

Part of the UN/ECE's preparation to the European follow-up of the Beijing + 5 platform, the conference was organized by the UN/ECE, the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) following the decision of Heads of Government of CEI Member States at their Zagreb Summit in November 1998. Over a hundred participants, representatives of governmental bodies, international organizations and NGOs from some 20 countries attended the deliberations on the lack of integration of a gender perspective in transition strategies, lack of access to guarantee funds and credit schemes, poorly developed education and training facilities and insufficient technical advisory services as well as underdeveloped social infrastructure to support women's entrepreneurship. The three organizing bodies will each follow up the recommendations of the conference in their programmes of work.
