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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

UN/LOCODE Advisory Group

Third annual meeting

Xiamen, 27-28 November 2019

Report on Activities of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group since its second annual meeting

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) identifies locations related to international trade around the world. It is a five-character code where the first two characters represent the International Standards Organization (ISO) country code followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
2. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group advises and supports the UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT in the maintenance and further development of UN/LOCODE.
3. The establishment of the Group was endorsed by UNECE EXCOM in June 2017 and its first meeting took place in Geneva from 30 November to 1 December 2017.
4. Following its second annual meeting held in Hangzhou, China, on 25-26 October 2018, based on the decisions made at the meeting, with support of the secretariat, the following activities have been taken to provide better services to the user community.

II. Overview of recent relevant developments

5. The UN/LOCODE Directory 2018-2 and 2019-1 have been published on the UNECE website as scheduled. The UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network has been expanded by a new nomination of Mongolia and re-nominations from Cyprus, Nepal, and the Netherlands.
6. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized the meeting of the Global Record Working Group (GRWG) in May. Despite being invited, the secretariat could not travel to attend it on-site due to a limited budget. The secretariat managed to record a presentation to introduce UN/LOCODE and have it played at the meeting, which was highly appreciated by FAO. GEWG recognized the importance of using standardized reference lists for submission of data within the Global Record Information System and saw the potential of UN/LOCODE as a suitable international standard for identifying ports in the system, taking into the recent developments (e.g.

National Focal Point Network and UN/LOCODE Child Codes). However, as not all ports currently have a UN/LOCODE assigned, GRWG proposed the possibility of the UN/LOCODE being the preferred option or utilizing an alternative code, noting that the creation of new UN/LOCODEs can also be requested

7. The Chair of UN/CEFACT has got involved in the review of the Convention of Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic adopted by the IMO (IMO FAL). The IMO EDGH group (data harmonization for the IMO FAL Convention) discussed the electronic data necessary for their convention in November 2019. They want to identify a number of new types of places that, such as the place of anchorage, terminal, berth. For the latter two, there are child repositories from IMO in GISIS that can assist with this. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) has suggested using a new standard that they are developing called Maritime Resource Name (MRN). It was suggested to looking into the feasibility of using UN/LOCODE as a base.
8. In the Regional Framework for Development, Design, Planning, and Operation of Dry Ports of International Importance initiated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), it is strongly recommended that all dry ports that have not yet applied for a UN/LOCODE should do so. Many countries in this region have requested for assigning a UN/LOCODE to their dry ports.

III. The revised UNECE Recommendation 16

9. As one of the most important decisions made at the first meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the Group invited UN/CEFACT to revise the UNECE Recommendation 16 through UN/CEFACT Open Development Process (ODP). (Decision 17-01)
10. Aiming at addressing the concerns by taking into consideration as indicated in Decision 17-01, the revised Recommendation 16 aims to:
 - Provide a clear definition of what the UN/LOCODE means, its scope and what granularity should be used;
 - Provide clear guidance on all aspects of UN/LOCODE to eliminate areas of ambiguity (interpretation of what a location is, addition of new functions, definitions of functions, etc.);
 - Set out how to register significant changes (what this means, if deletion should be allowed, what delay should be provided to allow the user community to prepare...);
 - Define how DMRs should be announced and communicated (acknowledgement of receipt of DMR, acknowledgement once it has been accepted or rejected with the reasons...);
 - Officially designate the use of “0” (zero) as a location that does not have an official function (function zero should not be combined with any other function). It could also be used to deprecate codes without deleting them from the list;
 - Consider requiring the registration of those who request codes (for post-verifications or future questions);
 - Consider how to share the history of DMRs;
 - Determine how to standardize multilingual entries and aliases in an unambiguous way;
 - Propose solutions for the reuse of UN/LOCODEs (in child repositories, for example) and how these could be identified and shared in the UN/LOCODE repository.

11. The project of the revision of the UNECE Recommendation 16 was approved in February 2018 and planned to be completed within one year. Mr. Alper Keceli was nominated as the Project Leader, who is the Turkey National Focal Point.
12. Under the UN/CEFACT ODP, a series of face-to-face meeting meetings has been organized in Geneva, with support of the secretariat:
 - The project launch meeting was held on 27 April 2018 during the 31st UN/CEFACT Forum;
 - The face-to-face project meeting took place on 3-4 December 2018; and
 - The last face-to-face project meeting was held on 3 April 2019 during the 33rd UN/CEFACT Forum.
13. Under the leadership of the Project Leader, the inputs and comments from the user community were compiled and discussed by email for several rounds. The project entered the stage of the Public Review on 21 June 2019. Based on the comments received during the two-month period of the Public Review, the project team organized a WebEx meeting to process all of them on 28 August 2019.
14. In the format in line with other UNECE Recommendations recently revised and published, the outcomes of the project include the revised Recommendation, guidelines, and three Annex. They have been approved by the UN/CEFACT Bureau. After the editorial changes by the secretariat, they will be ready for submission to the next UN/CEFACT Plenary in May 2020 for approval.
15. The revised Recommendation No. 16 incorporates the following changes:
 - **Part I: Recommendation No. 16**
It specifies the importance of involvement of governments and the user community in the development and maintenance of UN/LOCODE. The UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network should be enhanced by the nomination of the National Focal Point by governments.
 - **Part II: Guidelines for the Application of UN/LOCODE**
 - Clarification of which concept should be supported by locations assigned with UN/LOCODEs: point or area;
 - UN/LOCODE attributes include Name, Subdivision, Function, Status, Geographical Coordinates. All of the attributes are mandatory;
 - In order to be aligned with the UNECE Recommendation 19 (Code for Modes of Transport), retaining Function from '1' to '7' plus 'B', the functions of location are changed by 1) adding Function '8' to distinguish inland water ports from maritime ports (Function '1'); 2) adding Function 'A' for the Special Economic Zone; 3) redefining Function '0' as 'not officially functional';
 - The legacy status: 'AA', 'AC', 'AF', 'AI', 'AS', 'AQ' and 'RN', are replaced with 'AM', which means 'approved by the UN/LOCODE maintenance team.
 - What's more, the importance of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group is mentioned, including the UN/LOCODE maintenance team, who is responsible for validation of the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs);
 - UN/LOCODE Child Codes are introduced.
 - **Annex**
The annexes will be revised by the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group at the initiative of the secretariat when the process and procedures change. The revision of the Annex does not require the revision of Recommendation 16. It includes three Annex:

- Annex I: UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy and Procedure
- Annex II: Publication of UN/LOCODE Directory
- Annex III: Child Code List

IV. The UN/LOCODE maintenance

16. It was agreed to set up the UN/LOCODE maintenance team based on volunteers from the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group (Decision 18-01), which is responsible for the validation of DMRs with the support of the secretariat, led by two co-convenors (Decision 18-02). The new maintenance workflow was approved at the last annual meeting (Decision 18-03).
17. The UN/LOCODE maintenance team was set up to carry out the new maintenance workflow, with strong support of the secretariat, under the leadership of two co-convenors, one from the public sector and the other from the private sector.
18. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Meeting is organized via WebEx on a regular basis, normally weekly outside of the period of the UN/LOCODE directory generation and publication. The DMR submitters are invited to join the team to explain and justify their requests.
19. The collaboration platform has been implemented on the Collaborative UN/CEFACT Environment (CUE) for the team (<https://uncefact.unece.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=27787662>). The maintenance meeting page is published on CUE following each meeting and all approved DMRs are shared on CUE.
20. The list of the DMRs to be processed is shared on Google Sheets to support the collaborative work of the maintenance team. The originally requested fields cannot be edited, the team member can revise the attributes of DMR, such as location name, subdivision, function, and coordinates directly online and are encouraged to leave remarks to justify the revision or proposed validation result.
21. In the history of UN/LOCODE, it is the first time that UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) are validated by a team which is composed of nominated UN/LOCODE Focal Points, experts, and the secretariat. This best practice makes good use of the valuable resources of both the public sector and the private sector to improve the data quality of UN/LOCODE by the consistent understanding of the Recommendation 16 and application of validation rules.
22. Besides validation of individual DMR, the team has also discussed many maintenance issues, some of which will be raised to the next UN/LOCODE Advisory Group annual meeting for further discussion and decisions, such as
 - Requests for assigning a UN/LOCODE to a terminal or a facility at a port should be rejected and the submitter should be encouraged to use the UN/LOCODE Child Code like SMDG or BIC codes.
 - Thanks to the communication channel established at the occasion of the maintenance team meetings, the heavy-volume-DMR submitters have understood and adjusted their approach that locations requested for UN/LOCODEs must be for on-going trade purposes instead of one-time use.
 - Some requests are in the grey area of the scope defined in Recommendation 16, such as ones from the banking and telecommunication industries.
 - International organizations acting as register of various kinds of places or facilities are strongly encouraged to study the feasibility of creating a Child Code using UN/LOCODE as a base and avoid initiatives of introducing a new code list for different purposes.

V. The UN/LOCODE Re-engineering Project

23. As a positive response to Decision 18-08, CNIS volunteered to provide resources to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system.
 24. Based on the Terms of Reference agreed between the secretariat and CNIS, the project team was set up, at the project kick-off meeting held via WebEx on 27 July 2019, to develop and deploy the new UN/LOCODE system and then CNIS will support the data migration from the legacy system and the maintenance of the new system for at least five years.
 25. The Business Requirement Analysis report will be ready to be presented to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for approval at the third annual meeting. The new UN/LOCODE system is expected to be developed with modern ICT technology and to meet the business requirements.
 26. The business processes covering the DMR life cycle are specified in the BRA report. All use cases, including business use cases and administrative use cases are described in the report.
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