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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Centre for the Facilitation of Procedures and
Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport
Sixth session, 27-30 March 2000
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

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

Geneva, 22-25 November 1999

(Fourth meeting 1999)

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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.

GE.00-

CSG Chairman:

Mr. Ray Walker, United Kingdom - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair

CSG members present:

Mr. David Dobbing, Australia - CDWG Chair
Mr. Harry Featherstone, United States
Mr. Pierre Georget, France, EWG Vice Chair
Mr. Peter Guldentops, SWIFT
Mr. Dariush Haghighi Talab, Islamic Republic of Iran
Mr. Rob van Kuik, WCO
Ms. Paivi Lehtonen, Finland
Mr. Alexander de Lijster, Netherlands, ITPWG and CDWG Vice Chair
Mr. Klaus-Dieter Naujok, Canada - TMWG Chair, Standards Liaison Rapporteur
Mr. Emile Peeters, Belgium
Ms. Christina Wallén-Rahlén, Sweden
Mr. Peter Wilson, United Kingdom, TMWG Vice Chair
Mr. Christoph Wolf, Germany

Ex-officio members and Rapporteurs present:

Mr. Kenji Itoh, Japan - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair and Rapporteur for Asia
Mr. David Marsh, United Kingdom - Legal Liaison Rapporteur, LWG Vice Chair
Mr. Santiago Mila, IAPH/ Spain - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair, Chair of the Promotion Group
Ms. Teresa Sorrenti, United States - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair person

Invitees

Mr. Mike Doran - BPAWG Chair
Mr. Barry Keogh - EWG Chair

Secretariat present:

Ms. Carol Cosgrove-Sacks, Director of the UN/ECE Trade Division
Mr. Hans Hansell, Head of UN/CEFACT Secretariat
Mr. Will Keenan, Regional Advisor on Trade Facilitation
Ms. Rocío Cárdenas
Mr. Jean Kubler
Ms. Vlasta Macku
Mr. Markus Pikart

Apologies:

Mr. Roger Black - ITPWG Chair
Mr. Raul Colcher - UN/CEFACT Vice Chair
Mr. Tahseen Ahmad Khan, India
Ms. Adriana Sirzea, Romania

Common acronyms:

BPAWG - Business Process Analysis Working Group	ITPWG - International Trade Procedures Working Group
CDWG - Codes Working Group	TMWG - Techniques and Methodology Working Group
EWG - EDIFACT Working Group	SECI - Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
LWG - Legal Working Group	

AFACT - Asia Pacific Council for the Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. The Chair of the CSG first recognized the significant contribution made by Niels Rasmussen (now appointed as a regional advisor for trade facilitation at ESCAP) to the work of the CSG. He went on to stress the importance of this particular meeting, which was the last one before the upcoming UN/CEFACT 2000 Plenary. He then gave a summary on three issues that had occupied considerable time since the last meeting, namely: (a) the ebXML initiative, (b) the developments in the ITPWG, and (c) awareness-raising events.
2. Overall, the Chair felt that the work conducted by UN/CEFACT was developing in the right direction and was becoming tuned to meet industry needs. As an international organization, UN/CEFACT had two unique points. Firstly, it was the only international body combining trade facilitation and e-business in its remit. Secondly, it had a structure where industry could participate on an equal footing with governments. However, more work was needed to publicize UN/CEFACT activities. In this context, he noted with appreciation the development of the new identity manual and the work on the enhancement of the Web site.
3. The Director of the UN/ECE Trade Division welcomed the CSG and thanked the Chair, as well as CSG members, for their commitment to the development and promotion of UN/CEFACT activities, and reiterated her own personal support to its work. She emphasized the importance of the ebXML initiative and of a more active promotion of UN/CEFACT so that it is considered key by both governments, and the private sector. The UN/ECE was fully committed to provide resources to support UN/CEFACT's work. The Director pointed out that for the first time since she had been in post, the Secretariat was fully staffed. However, the travel budget was inadequate and extra-budgetary resources would need to be sought if UN/CEFACT staff were to service meeting outside Geneva.

THE EBXML INITIATIVE

4. The Chair of the TMWG reported on the first meeting of the ebXML initiative that had taken place in San José, California, from 17 to 19 November 1999. He, on behalf of UN/CEFACT, had chaired the meeting with Dr. R. Sutor from OASIS being the Vice-Chair. One hundred and fifty experts from the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific attended the conference. The first day and a half were dedicated to panels and presentations. Among the points to be noted during this first part of the

meeting was a statement by major industry players that they were in favour of a global solution in the ebXML area. The panel of users stressed that the new technology should work seamlessly with EDI. The second day and a half saw the setting up of 8 project teams (ebXML requirements; business process methodology; technical architecture; core components; transport/routing and packaging; registry and repository; technical coordination and support; marketing, awareness and education) that subsequently chose their team leaders and editors and worked on the scope and deliverables of individual teams. The overall outcome of the meeting was very positive. Participants appreciated the involvement of the UN in the initiative and many made it clear that they would not have attended if the UN had not been involved. From the technical point of view, emphasis was put on deliverables in terms of computer-to-computer solutions and business models. The two "groups" present, namely EDI and Web experts, interacted smoothly. Participants agreed on the dates for meetings in the year 2000: 31 January-4 February (Orlando, Florida), 8-12 May (Brussels), 7-11 August (tentatively the USA), and 6-11 November (tentatively Japan).

5. It was clearly vital to come up with concrete ebXML solutions within, but preferably before, the end of the agreed 15-18-month period of the project. This was crucial in view of the declared readiness of major information technology companies to adopt the proposed solution if it was produced in time. The TMWG Chair was confident that the deadline could be met. In view of this, the CSG felt that it would be advisable to put the UN/CEFACT XML activities on hold until the joint project with OASIS was completed. Further clarification on a possible ebXML data repository and the role of individual working groups, in particular the EWG and the TMWG, was also required.
6. Another issue was the protection of intellectual property rights for the solutions developed under the initiative. Recently, OASIS had proposed a model whereby a license would allow for free usage of the recommendations, but would not give the possibility to modify them. The TMWG Chair endorsed the principle of this idea.
7. The TMWG Chair also reported on the executive structure of the ebXML initiative. Four persons had been appointed, namely two representatives of OASIS - the President (Mr. W. Smith) and the Strategy Officer and the Vice-Chair of the Initiative (Dr. R. Sutor) and two from UN/CEFACT (the CSG Chair and the Chair of the TMWG). A proposal was under consideration to establish an advisory board around this core team, consisting of people who were not directly involved in the initiative but who supported it and who could add significant credibility.

REPORTS FROM MANDATED GROUPS

8. The Vice-Chair of the International Trade Procedures Working Group (ITPWG) reported on the successful re-launch of the Group in September and commended the CSG champion (the member from WCO) on his excellent work. A new Chair (Mr. R. Black) and Vice-Chair (Mr. A. de Lijster) were elected during the meeting and the work programme reviewed, including the setting of new priorities. Among them were revisions of Recommendation No. 18, an update of the compendium of trade facilitation recommendations and of the

guidelines to Recommendation No. 1. There was a broad agreement in the CSG on these priorities. In addition, the CSG felt that Web versions of the UN aligned documents should be made available and that the work on the trade facilitation index should also become a priority item for the ITPWG.

9. The ITPWG meeting had been well attended and there were many committed members. However, participation in the meeting (17 participants, excluding the Secretariat) was largely restricted to Europe, in particular, Western Europe. It was therefore felt that a widening of the membership should be sought, so as to achieve a worldwide scope for the Group's work. The Legal Liaison Rapporteur made a suggestion that the establishment of regional sub-groups might facilitate intra-regional work. This model worked well in the case of the LWG. Back-to-back meetings with the Codes Working Group, whose work was closely related to that of the ITPWG, could also encourage more participation. The next meeting was going to take place from 29 November to 1 December 1999 in Geneva.
10. The Legal Liaison Rapporteur in his role as the Vice-Chair of the LWG outlined the work programme of the Group. It focused on the four types of legal solutions that would be simultaneously pursued in order to create an enabling legal environment for the development of electronic business, namely: (a) contractual solutions (such as the interchange agreement), (b) legislative solutions (national legislation compatible with UNCITRAL), (c) voluntary instruments (codes of conduct) and (d) international solutions (international agreements or conventions).
11. LWG had created two regional sub-groups in Asia and North America, which met on a regular basis. The AFACT legal sub-group met on 7-8 September in Seoul and the North American sub-group on 15-17 September in Philadelphia. This allowed for more participation from regional experts, as travel costs were less important. The Vice-Chair reported on the initiative by AFACT's LWG to create a global repository for e-commerce legislation. This information would be made available through the LWG Web site.
12. The last meeting of the LWG had taken place on 22-24 September in London. It had reviewed the Group's work programme and, in particular, had concentrated on the draft Recommendation for an e-commerce interchange agreement. The text of this Recommendation should be finalized during the coming LWG meeting in December (Utrecht) and subsequently submitted as a Recommendation to the UN/CEFACT March 2000 Plenary for approval. Another important element on the agenda was the code of conduct for e-commerce where it was also hoped that it could be turned into a UN/CEFACT Recommendation.
13. The Chair of the Business Process Analysis Working Group (BPAWG) reported on the latest series of events which his Group had made a substantive contribution to, namely the July 1999 EWG meeting in Vienna, the August 1999 EAN meeting in Brussels and the September 1999 EWG meeting in Canberra. Further, there was a proposal to create regional sub-groups for Asia Pacific, and for Europe - the latter proposal would be discussed at the BPAWG meeting on 2 December 1999. Good cooperation had been established with the EWG - for example, a joint meeting would take place in March 2000. The next meeting was going to be used to discuss more generic issues cutting across UN/CEFACT. Cooperation with ITPWG was also considered of utmost importance. However, there was still a question mark

about the level of Secretariat resources available to support the Group.

14. The Chair of the EDIFACT Working Group (EWG) reported on the progress of the work of the Group. First, the D99B directory had been completed despite input difficulties and software problems. Consequently, he felt that the production of the D00A directory should be much easier. Second, the meeting in Canberra was a success. There had been very high-level participation from the Australian Government and over two hundred experts had attended, with an additional 120 external delegates joining for the seminar day. The joint UN/CEFACT-OASIS ebXML initiative was announced during the seminar. Third, the adoption of UML modeling was approved and expertise in this area would be embedded in each working group. The Chair of the TMWG expressed his willingness to assist the EWG on this issue.
15. Strategic decisions needed to be taken by the EWG on its relationship with the Secretariat and on future financial matters. These issues would be discussed during the EWG management team meeting on 2 December. Further, as he and the Vice Chair were stepping down in June 2000, nominations for a new Chair and Vice-Chair would be requested through the EWG list server, with a deadline by end-January 2000. Elections for new officers would take place during the Paris 2000 meeting.
16. The member from the UK reported on the Global Commerce Initiative involving EAN and major companies. The objective was to develop guidelines for convergence on one international implementation of UN/EDIFACT for purchase orders and invoices. Two meetings had taken place, one in the United Kingdom and the other in the USA, and, as a principle, it had been decided to work with EAN/UCC standards using solutions based on Simpl-EDI. To this end, participants were to review the Simpl-EDI work within their companies, with a view to assessing its effectiveness. It had also been agreed to set up a group of senior officers to link the work of EAN and UN/CEFACT.
17. The Chair of the Techniques and Methodology Working Group (TMWG) reported on the two meetings that had taken place since the last CSG meeting. The first one, in Vienna, had concentrated on UML modeling methodology. The second meeting in Concord, California saw the development of a contribution to the ebXML initiative, which is currently available on the ebXML.org Web site. In the meantime, four new TMWG members had been nominated, one was from France and three were from the USA.
18. The TMWG Vice-Chair pointed out that the document N090 "UN/CEFACT Unified Modeling Methodology" was a core deliverable of the Group and had received a very positive feedback from modeling experts. It was going to be used for the development of projects, including one in the area of cargo insurance.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CODES WORKING GROUP

19. CDWG became the first working group to undergo an annual review in line with the requirements contained in R.650. The main elements of the review were the following: membership, work programme, problems and opportunities, and relationships with other working groups. Its Chairman led the presentation of the Group's structure and work.

20. CDWG consisted of 10 regular and 5 virtual members. Two new physical members (from Japan and Finland) would join at the next meeting, and the Group also expected a new virtual member from Sweden. A search was under way for a replacement of the member from France who had recently resigned. The Chair felt that the Group would be strengthened if there were representatives from WCO and from IATA.
21. Within the CDWG, two sub-groups had been established. They were the UN/LOCODE group, which had been re-constituted two years ago, following a proposal from the International Chamber of Shipping. (The next meeting of the UN/LOCODE group would be on 29 November 1999 in Geneva, in conjunction with the CDWG meeting - 30 November-2 December 1999). The second sub-group was a joint UN/ECE-ISO team and was set up to work on Recommendation No. 20 "Codes for Units of Measure".
22. The CDWG was responsible for fourteen code-related Recommendations, and only three did not require regular maintenance. The most dynamic recommendation was that on the UN/LOCODE (No. 16). An update was required for Recommendation No. 5 in relation to the new issue of INCOTERMS. Work was also going on in relation to Recommendations No. 20 and No. 7. Revised codes lists were being considered for Recommendations No. 21 and No. 24. These documents would be finalized during the upcoming CDWG meeting and uploaded on the Web for a two-month public review period. The Group was preparing three new Recommendations, namely Recommendation No. 28 "Codes for types of transport", Recommendation No. 29 "Codes for types of cargo (will become a proposal for a separate recommendation after the splitting of Recommendation No. 21 into two parts, the first one being on codes for packaging) and Recommendation No. 30 "Harmonized commodity description and coding system for the coding of goods and commodities" which encouraged an extended use of the WCO Harmonized System. Work on Recommendation No. 30 was at an advanced stage. Currently, the text was being revised following public comments. The intention was to submit it to the UN/CEFACT March 2000 Plenary for approval. The Group also worked on procedures for the quality assurance process.
23. A possible future opportunity was seen in the offer by the Electronic Commerce Code Management Association to undertake some aspects of code management for CDWG. Perceived problems included the absence of participants from WCO and IATA and the excessive dependence, in the UN/LOCODE group, on one expert. In relation to the UN/LOCODE, it was stressed that, in order to avoid confusion, requests for new codes should be channeled through one organization in each country. It was also felt that liaison with ISO should be strengthened. There was also a need to promote further the results of CDWG's work in relation to users, for instance by issuing a publication containing all UN/CEFACT code-related recommendations. This was an important opportunity. CDWG maintained particularly close working relations with ITPWG and EWG. No specific problems were identified in this cooperation.
24. The CDWG Chair congratulated the Secretariat on the high quality of support provided to his Group. In concluding the review, the CSG commended the work of the CDWG.

REVISION OF R.650

25. The CSG Chair, the Legal Liaison Rapporteur and the Vice-Chair from the United States, who had suggested amendments relating to electronic communication and virtual meetings of the CSG, submitted a paper proposing changes in R.650. The Legal Liaison Rapporteur explained that the revisions had first to be approved by the UN/CEFACT Plenary and subsequently by the Committee on Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED). Other suggestions for amendments to R.650 covered the membership of the CSG and the implications on its quorum; the CSG voting process; and the organization of meetings.

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

26. The Chair of the CSG provided some background information on the agenda item. The Electronic Commerce Ad hoc Working Group had been created at the request of the Executive Secretary of the UN/ECE. A short meeting had been held and virtual participation strongly encouraged. Subsequently it had been agreed to prepare an information paper on the topic. The document had been reviewed several times and was now intended for submission to the UN/CEFACT March 2000 Plenary.

27. The Secretariat then introduced the draft document. Adoption by the March 2000 Plenary would lead to the closure of the Group since it would have then completed its mandate. Some changes to the text were required before the official submission of the document to the Plenary.

UN DATABASE AND AUTOMATION

28. The Chair of the EWG informed the CSG about the current situation regarding the production of the latest directory. The problems that had been encountered in the past had been overcome and the lessons learned had been applied. He noted the improvement in directory production and commended the work of the Secretariat. As a result, the production of directory D00A was going ahead smoothly. The Directory Production Team was meeting in parallel to the CSG and the Directory was expected to be ready for audit very shortly.

29. A member of the Secretariat emphasized that directory production should be viewed as a management issue. Data flow for directory production was quite complex, with systems managed by independent groups being linked through continuously changing interfaces. He pointed out that changes in the system must not be made in the course of directory production. Stabilization of implementation guidelines was therefore vital for the progress in the automation process. Despite the fact that DMRDEF could operate independently of DIRDEF, he felt that the production of a clean DIRDEF was of utmost importance for users.

PROMOTION OF UN/CEFACT

NEED FOR A NEW FORWARD STRATEGY

30. The Chair of the CSG introduced main lines of the proposed UN/CEFACT strategy for promotion and awareness. The problem to be addressed was the lack of a separate identity and a clear image for UN/CEFACT. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) suggested that main strengths of UN/CEFACT were as follows: being part of the UN, the involvement of industry on an equal footing with Governments, a focus on business process, a unique combination of technical and policy roles, and the strength of empowered working groups. Weak points included lack of resources and a perceived over association with Europe which was in contradiction with the worldwide remit of UN/CEFACT. The Chair believed that if UN/CEFACT built upon identified strengths, reinforced its roots around the world, maintained an active part in the ISO/IEC MoU, progressed the ebXML initiative, and delivered on the compendium of trade facilitation recommendations and other issues related to the WTO developments, UN/CEFACT would be able to capitalize on its opportunities. This would substantially improve the external perception of UN/CEFACT and could also attract additional funding for the activities. The threat was that if this opportunity was missed, UN/CEFACT might be perceived as irrelevant by the outside world.
31. Participants supported the need for a new promotional strategy and image for UN/CEFACT. It was felt important to define roles and responsibilities, clearly set objectives - and establish the means to achieve them - and prioritize goals taking account of the available resources. The CSG Chair undertook to produce a draft promotional strategy paper to the Group and to the UN/CEFACT Plenary.
32. A proposal was presented to the Group to change the title behind the UN/CEFACT acronym (The Centre for the Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for the Facilitation of Administration, Commerce and Transport) so that a) the role of the Centre could be more easily understood by those not immediately involved in its work and b) the name would more accurately reflect the focus of work. Such a proposal would need to be approved by the UN/CEFACT Plenary. Several options were discussed but following a proposal from the Director of the Trade Division it was agreed to propose that the Plenary adopt a change of name to the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. The acronym UN/CEFACT would remain unchanged.

UN/CEFACT WEB SITE

33. A member of the Secretariat reported on the work that had been undertaken to improve the management of the UN/CEFACT Web site and presented some proposals for its further enhancement. With regard to a possible document retrieval system, the service provider for the UN/ECE, the International Computing Centre, was developing a Conference Document System. Work on this project should be completed in early 2000. The UN/CEFACT Web page had now its own URL on the Internet - www.uncefact.org.
34. Among the suggestions to enhance the quality of the Web site was the creation of a repository for PowerPoint presentations made by Heads of Delegations (HoDs) or CSG members, inclusion of a "Latest news" page, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. The need for a regular

and effective maintenance of the Web site was stressed as an important element of UN/CEFACT's image and credibility. Responsibility for content lied with individual Secretariat members in charge of substantive activities, in cooperation with relevant working groups.

THE IDENTITY MANUAL

35. The Chair of the Promotion Working Group presented the Identity Manual developed with sponsorship from the Port of Barcelona. Once it was finalized, a thousand copies of the Manual would be printed and distributed to users. He then introduced the structure of the Manual, as well as its individual parts, including the definition of the size, and colour of the logo, and its application for different purposes, e.g. names of working groups and products, PowerPoint applications, etc. It was felt that clear guidelines should be prepared for the use of the logo and incorporated in the Manual. The electronic version of the logo files should also be provided. Before deciding on the design of the UN/CEFACT home page, a prototype would need to be designed. The Manual will not be finalized until the UN/CEFACT Plenary decides on the Centre's new name.

UN/CEFACT 2000 CONFERENCE

36. The Chair of the CSG introduced a proposal for the programme of the UN/CEFACT 2000 Conference. The conference would last two days and would target two groups of potential participants: (a) government policy-makers (such as HoDs and representatives from missions), and (b) participants representing industry and commerce. A special effort would be made to attract participants from countries in transition and developing countries. To assist the targeted audience, the conference could be organized around two tracks: (a) a trade facilitation track focusing on country experiences and, if applicable, WTO-related issues; and (b) a technology track focusing on UN/CEFACT's contribution to e-business exchanges and the ebXML project. The CSG Chair would make a presentation at the opening of the conference outlining UN/CEFACT's strategy towards electronic business exchanges. In view of the limited time allocated to the conference and the diversity of audience it was suggested that the two tracks be run in parallel and be interlinked through joint opening and closing sessions.

DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

37. The member from Sweden provided information on the current status of the WTO discussions on trade facilitation and outlined possible outcomes of the Seattle conference. It was unlikely that a detailed discussion on trade facilitation would take place. Three options could be envisaged: (a) trade facilitation becoming an item within a broad negotiating mandate, (b) trade facilitation being taken up within the Council for Goods, and (c) trade facilitation not being included in the future agenda. A separate agreement on technical assistance might also emerge. Since the WTO would

need a trade facilitation expert body, the best strategy for UN/CEFACT in Seattle might be to push for the issue to become a part of any future negotiations.

38. The Director of the Division felt that a thoughtful approach to Seattle was required. Further, she felt that the links between all the international organizations working in the trade facilitation area in the WTO needed to be strengthened and that UN/CEFACT had the potential to play a leading role in that effort. Regional commissions had also communicated to the UN/ECE that UN/CEFACT should take the lead in trade facilitation. She also felt that the WCO would welcome closer cooperation with UN/CEFACT and that it was very desirable to reinforce, in an open and complementary way, cooperation with UNCTAD. Finally she was very happy to report that relations with the WTO Secretariat were excellent.
39. The Chair of the CSG expressed the view that UN/CEFACT's work, in this area, should continue irrespective of the outcome of the Seattle conference. In the event that trade facilitation was taken as an item for future negotiations, the round might take 5 to 6 years. During this period of time, UN/CEFACT should feed the results of its work into WTO discussions. The member from the United Kingdom also suggested the need to improve UN/CEFACT's infrastructure, in particular to involve PRO Committees in all countries, possibly as virtual members. The Chair of the BPAWG added that UN/CEFACT's partnerships with NGOs such as IATA or FIATA should be strengthened.
40. The CSG Chair felt that an assessment of major strong points of UN/CEFACT in trade facilitation should be undertaken. Among them were, for instance, the process-related approach to improving trade, the attention paid to the whole value chain of trade facilitation as contained in Recommendation No. 18 (which was in contrast to the macro-economic approach of the WTO), and the strong industry interfaces.

ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

41. The Chair of the CSG reported on the OECD Electronic Commerce Forum (12-13 October 1999, Paris). The Director of the Trade Division and himself had represented UN/CEFACT. Among many organizations attending the meeting were UNCTAD and UNCITRAL. The focus had been on presentations related to framework issues, in particular in the legal and security area. He felt that the OECD activity was complementary to UN/CEFACT's work.

OTHER UN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

42. The Head of the UN/CEFACT Secretariat briefed the meeting about cooperation with other regional commissions. In particular, over the last three years, a good relationship had been developed with ESCWA. The Secretariat had been regularly invited to high-level expert meetings on e-business and transport held within ESCWA. Work on trade facilitation and e-business was developing successfully in the region - examples were automation of the port in Dubai, and the development of national EDI and XML plans to automate trade information. Further, UN/CEFACT had long-

standing and good relations with ESCAP and the renewal of contacts with ECLAC was underway.

COOPERATION WITH MEMBER COUNTRIES

43. A member of the Secretariat reported on two recent missions. The first one had been to deliver a keynote speech at the First International Electronic Business Conference in Odessa, Ukraine. The trade facilitation body established in Ukraine under the Czech-funded technical assistance project had organized this. Participants at the conference included representatives of government, as well as the private sector. The focus was on legal issues and transport. It was strongly felt that a legal framework was needed for a successful development of e-commerce. For this reason, the first activity undertaken by the new trade facilitation body was the preparation of a draft law on electronic documents.

44. The second mission to Malta had been conducted jointly with the Regional Advisor on trade facilitation. The purpose was to identify possible avenues of assistance from the UN/ECE to the development of trade facilitation initiatives in Malta, and, later, possibly in the Mediterranean region. A number of proposals had emanated from the mission. Some of these were triggered by the requirements of the EU accession process. Others had a more regional scope and could be conducted in cooperation with other UN regional commissions, in particular ESCWA and ECA. Lastly, proposals were made which were aimed at increasing the visibility of Malta within and beyond the region.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

45. UNCTAD was in the middle of the preparations for the tenth conference of the organization, to be held in February 2000 in Bangkok. A reorganization was expected to arise from the conference, with more flexible teams working on specific issues. In the area of electronic commerce, UNCTAD was recently focusing on the organization of regional awareness-raising seminars, such as in Peru, Kenya and Sri Lanka.

46. The Chair of the CSG and the Head of the UN/CEFACT Secretariat had recently met with the Director of the Division for Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency at UNCTAD, and the Head of the Electronic Commerce Section at UNCTAD. The latter was particularly interested in the UN/CEFACT- OASIS ebXML initiative. The CSG felt that a strategy for cooperation with UNCTAD should be prepared, including technical assistance issues. At the same time, UN/CEFACT should define its own role in technical assistance in general.

ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL FOR FACILITATION OF PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES FOR ADMINISTRATION, COMMERCE AND TRANSPORT (AFACT)

47. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia reported to the CSG on the recent AFACT activities. The AFACT Management team, the joint working groups and the Plenary had met on 6-8 September 1999 in Seoul, back-to-back to the EDICOM/99 conference. The meeting adopted bylaws, which had resulted in a number of changes in the organizational structure. Further they had decided on AFACT's acronym, "the Asia Pacific Council for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport". By

virtue of the new bylaws, Australia had joined AFACT as its thirteenth member. The Rapporteur also reported on a project launched in 1996 by the AFACT Internet Working Implementation Committee. Its objective was to enable the exchange of electronic messages, in particular EDI and e-mail, among different Customs Administrations in the region. A pilot project was expected to start at the end of 1999. The annual EDICOM conference had been held in Seoul on 9-11 September 1999. Its focus was on business-to-business and business-to-consumer solutions and the Rapporteur and a number of CSG members including the Chair had attended it. On 4-8 October, the Sri Lankan Council for Information Technology organized an IT conference and two workshops in Colombo. The Rapporteur, the Legal Liaison Rapporteur, the CSG Chair and the Chair of CDWG had attended. Workshops were dedicated to awareness raising about EDI/EC issues and to legal aspects of information technology. The CSG Chair also reported on the Indian national conference on e-commerce held in Bombay, which he and the Legal Liaison Rapporteur had also contributed to.

SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN COOPERATIVE INITIATIVE (SECI)

48. The regional advisor on trade facilitation reported on developments in the South Eastern Cooperative Initiative (SECI). To date, 10 of 11 SECI Participating States had established trade facilitation (PRO) committees and a SECIPRO association had been formed. This was perceived as a sign of commitment to the procedural reforms that would be preconditions for the World Bank to grant loans for border-crossing infrastructure projects in the region. A Memorandum of Understanding on Facilitating International Road Transport had also been signed by all of the SECI countries and, following the October 1999 meeting of the Regional Transport Committee, the work on its practical implementation started. With regard to the Stability Pact, three working groups (tables) had been set up, including one on economic reconstruction. The European Investment Bank would screen infrastructure development projects while the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was responsible for those relating to private enterprise development. A donor conference was scheduled for January 2000. The Stability Pact would also have a Business Advisory Council modeled after a similar body within SECI.

WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION (WCO)

49. The member from WCO stressed the importance of customs modernization and restructuring. The revised Kyoto Convention had been accepted in principle in June 1999. A legal compromise had also been reached on the last outstanding issue of who could become a contracting party to the Convention. Consequently, the Convention was open for ratification by existing and new members. The Director of Compliance and Facilitation of the WCO intended to raise the issue of a MoU with UN/CEFACT at the March-April meeting of the WCO Permanent Technical Committee. UN/CEFACT should also consider the issue at the UN/CEFACT March 2000 Plenary, with a view to obtaining the necessary mandate.

WORLD BANK

50. The Secretariat had received the text of the MoU on the World Bank's Global Facilitation Initiative. The CSG was requested to provide guidance to the Secretariat on what might be the position of UN/CEFACT on this issue.

DEVELOPMENTS IN STANDARDIZATION

MOU DEVELOPMENTS

51. The Chair of the CSG reported on a meeting of the MoU Management Group that took place in New Orleans (15-17 November 1999) where he had chaired and also represented UN/CEFACT. His overall evaluation of the meeting was positive. ITU showed interest and support for the MoU, which they intended to sign before UN/CEFACT March 2000 Plenary. Among the resolutions adopted was one on UNTDED requesting TC154 not to take action on any revision until UN/CEFACT had completed its survey of its user base. Another resolution focused on the benefits of awareness building in standardization. To this end, a sub-group would be established. The meeting adopted Terms of Reference for a common business object summit that was to take place in May 2000 in Geneva. The Chair felt that the summit, as well as further cooperation in the framework of the MoU, was a high priority for UN/CEFACT.

52. A resolution had been adopted regarding a perceived lack of support from the IEC and UN/ECE Secretariats in servicing the MoU, including travel to meetings outside Geneva. A clarification was then provided by the Secretariat that, due to the lack of travel funds in the Secretariat, an arrangement had been agreed with ISO, which involved UN/ECE servicing MoU meetings only if they took place in Geneva.

TC154 AND THE BSR

53. With regard to ISO TC154, it was felt that there was a need to follow developments closely, in particular those relating to UNTDED, and the issue of units of measure and the location of codes in trade documents.

54. The revision of the Compendium of Trade Facilitation Recommendations had been included on the agenda of the next meeting of ISO TC154. While there was an agreement on the high priority that was attached by the ITPWG and the CSG to this issue, it was pointed out that ISO TC154 was not the appropriate forum to undertake any review. It was also made clear that no formal request to this effect had been officially made to ISO TC154. However, it was mentioned that references to ISO standards with the Compendium might require a review by an appropriate ISO body.

55. Regarding the BSR, the Chair recalled that the CSG position had not substantially changed over the past few years. However, it was now right to review that position in a thoughtful manner. The TMWG had the competence needed to undertake such a study, which should allow the CSG to consider its position on a well-documented basis. As an example of issues involved, it was noted that the issue of multilingualism in data directories had not been satisfactorily addressed and, therefore, an initiative in this area would have a merit. The BSR should have compared the different data semantics that had been developed, but seemed to be

faced with serious difficulties in attaining this objective. In this context, the Vice-Chair of the EWG reported on an alternative approach; a project currently under way in his country aiming to develop a basic semantic dictionary containing all basic semantic units in a multilingual version - instead of creating bridges between different dictionaries, which was the underlying idea in the BSR.

UNIFIED MODELLING LANGUAGE (UML) REPOSITORY

56. The member from the USA reported on the progress of the work on the repository. So far, a contribution in kind had been offered for software, but not for infrastructure.

SECRETARIAT RESOURCES AND ALLOCATION

57. The Head of the UN/CEFACT Secretariat reviewed the main responsibilities of the staff in the Trade Facilitation Section and gave details of the travel budget. He expressed his concern about the fact that the limited budget did not allow the staff to attend meetings held outside Geneva.

A BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR UN/CEFACT

58. The CSG Chair gave an oral report explaining the rationale behind the proposal to create a Business Advisory Council. The objective was to increase awareness about the work of UN/CEFACT by reaching out to senior industry players who are influential in their communities, as well as strengthening the links with academia. A paper will be prepared for discussion at the forthcoming Plenary.

NEW METHODS OF WORKING

59. The Standards Liaison Rapporteur gave an oral report on the progress in the paper on new methods of working for the development of standards. A substantive Plenary paper on this issue was being prepared. It was also agreed that an additional paper covering general developments, but building on the principles contained in the Plenary paper, would be produced. The paper would cover issues such as the need to encourage electronic working and the inter-plenary approval processes.

OTHER BUSINESS

MEETING DATES

60. 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
31 March 2001
21-24 May 2001
