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**COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Eighth session, 27-30 May 2002

**International Trade Procedures Working Group (ITPWG)  
Report to the UN/CEFACT Plenary**

Submitted by the Chairman of the International Trade Procedures Working Group (ITPWG) \*

The present report is being submitted to the Plenary for information.

\* This present document is reproduced in the form in which it was received by the secretariat.

## 1. Meetings

The ITPWG met three times since the last plenary in March 2001:

- **Rotterdam (12 – 14 September 2001)**
- **Geneva (3 – 5 December 2001)**
- **Geneva (8 – 10 April 2002)**

During the meeting in Rotterdam, Mr. Alex de Lijster of the Netherlands was appointed as Chairman and Mr. Maxence Orthlieb of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as Vice Chair.

## 2. Recent Activities

Trade Facilitation has recently gained increased importance on the agendas of many Governments and trade related international organizations. This is associated with three major developments; the demands of the new economy (e-commerce, global supply chains, etc) for faster international delivery of goods; the enhanced WTO focus on trade facilitation contained in the November 2001 WTO Doha Ministerial Declaration; and also increased emphasis on the need for trade facilitation instruments (especially measures to ensure better controls for safety) in the aftermath of the September 11 events in the United States of America. The ITPWG is working to respond positively to this new environment for trade facilitation.

The work of the ITPWG involves:

1. development of new trade facilitation instruments, wherever needed;
2. maintenance of existing instruments;
3. providing information on existing instruments (promotion).

During the past year, the ITPWG completed a number of initiatives. The revised edition of the *Compendium of Trade Facilitation Recommendations* was completed. This publication, which is the major international reference guide to trade facilitation instruments, was developed in cooperation with UNCTAD. The *Compendium* is currently being printed and will be available for the upcoming International Forum on Trade Facilitation in the three official languages of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (English, French and Russian). UNCTAD is also translating the document into Spanish and Arabic.

Other publications that have been revised and will be available for the Forum include Recommendation No. 18 and the United Nations Layout Key: Guidelines for Application (related to Recommendation No. 1). These publications will also be available in the three UNECE official languages.

The ITPWG has been very closely involved in the preparations for the Forum on Trade Facilitation. The Working Group and the various membership organizations have, together with the UNECE Secretariat, drafted recommendations and proposals to be highlighted during the Forum. In addition, the ITPWG prepared two documents for the Forum, namely *Trade Facilitation: An introduction to the basic concepts and benefits*; and *The Single Window Concept: Enhancing the efficient exchange of information between trade and government*

### 3. Future Work

The ITPWG strongly believes that the simplification of formalities and procedures, the standardisation and improvement of the physical infrastructure and facilities, and the harmonisation of applicable laws and regulations will enhance the development of international trade and lead to considerable reductions in the cost and complexity of trade. As detailed below, the Working Group will develop various initiatives in the coming years to help achieve this goal.

**Single Window:** The ITPWG, in cooperation with the Business Processes Analysis Working Group (BPAWG), will develop a formal Recommendation and Implementation Guide for the establishment of a Single Window. This will help to create opportunities for using modern technologies together with the currently recommended practices on simplification, standardization and harmonization of procedures and documentation. The Working Group's goal is to assist local authorities in understanding the potential of this concept and to facilitate its effective implementation. All present initiatives on the topic will be considered and the model will clearly incorporate the existence of International Supply Chains.

**Implementation:** One of the most important aspects of Trade Facilitation remains the implementation of the various conventions, standards and recommendations that are already available. For this, plans will be developed covering the progressive introduction of measures (based on a number of simple steps).

**Benchmarks:** The ITPWG will also explore that development of benchmarks for measuring trade facilitation implementation. Much work has already been done in this area, but to date, no definitive approach has emerged. The Working Group will work with the World Bank and other organizations in attempting to develop an appropriate model and Recommendation in this important area.

**Training:** The Working Group will also work with the secretariat in the development of appropriate learning / training tools on trade facilitation, including the development of an e-learning tool based on, among others, Recommendation 18.

**Trade Facilitation Measures for the New Economy:** With the development of e-commerce and global supply chains, the nature of trade is changing and, as a consequence, the requirements to facilitate this trade are also evolving. The Working Group will consider the priority areas that need to be addressed and will identify relevant major areas of work that should be addressed by the Group.

**E-Compendium:** The Working Group will consider the best approach to the development of the next edition of the *Compendium of Trade Facilitation Recommendations*. Options to be considered include the development of a fully searchable and indexed database (or knowledge base) of trade facilitation instruments, available both on the internet and on CD-ROM for use in training etc.

**Trade Facilitation in the World Trade Organization:** The Working Group will consider how best it can contribute to and inform the debate regarding the inclusion of trade facilitation within WTO.

**Driver Visa:** The Working Group will consider the development of a Recommendation on driver visas for eastern Europe.

### 4. ITPWG in the new CSG Structure

The proposed structure of the UN/CEFACT forum is seen as a step to ensure a harmonized approach of all e-commerce and other work, especially where standards and e-business tools need to go hand-in-hand leading to easier controls and proper pre-arrival information.

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