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Eighth session, 27-30 May 2002

Techniques and Methodology Working Group (TMWG) Report

Submitted by the Chairman of the TMWG Working Group *

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

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

This report outlines key activities by UN/CEFACT's Techniques and Methodology Working Group as they relate to its work programme key priorities, as well as their relationship to the work of other UN/CEFACT Working Groups, such as EWG, BPAWG and eBTWG.

During the 12 months since the last UN/CEFACT plenary, TMWG has continued to work on the UN/CEFACT Modelling Methodology (UMM), which utilizes the Unified Modelling language (UML). This work has taken into account the feedback received from BPAWG and eBTWG, both users of the UMM.

General

Since the last UN/CEFACT plenary session, TMWG has met three times. Between the time of submitting this report and the plenary session in May, TMWG will have an additional meeting. Because of its workload, TMWG now holds four meetings, one per quarter. This report will outline key TMWG activities.

During each of its meetings, the priority work item for TMWG was the progression of N090 - UMM. The document describes the methodology that has been adopted by UN/CEFACT to model business processes and support the development of "existing" and "next generation" information exchange for any type business be it paper based or electronic.

As a result of UN/CEFACT continuing the ebXML work related to content and context, much time has been spent in working closely together with the business process related projects under eBTWG, since their work is based on the UMM meta model. This close relationship has resulted in fine-tuning UMM. In addition, to ensure effective linkage between the two groups, it was agreed to hold joint meetings. The first joint meeting was held this year in Seattle. The next meeting will held in Barcelona.

Dublin, 15 - 20 July 2001

Finalization of N090 Version 10

As reported during the last UN/CEFACT Plenary, the goal for TMWG was to have a version available for implementation by summer 2001. This meeting served to do just that. However, owing to the amount of work required to address the request from BPAWG and ebXML to improve the layout of the document, the time required to do this work was more than the five days of the meeting. Therefore the editor agreed to work with the team to finish version 10 shortly after the meeting.

Version 10 became available in mid-September and has since become the version that is being used by eBTWG, EWG and BPAWG. The document is available electronically from the TMWG web site (<http://www.gefeg.com/tmwg/n090r10.htm>).

Hong Kong, 5 - 10 November 2001

Having received numerous suggestions to improve on the layout of version 10 the meeting served to address the topic and to determine if a new layout was needed. Work centred on improving consistency and addressing the content of chapter 8 (Meta Model) and chapter 9 (Patterns).

The output of the meeting was draft version 11, with chapters 1-3 having undergone minor revision mostly in regard to cross references to tables and figures. Work on the other chapters was scheduled for the next meeting in order to address the issue of the various views within the meta model. An issues raised by some implementers. The group was unable to address the topic owing to the unfortunate absence of our editor and meta model experts for whom the meeting conflicted with other meetings.

Seattle, 4 - 8 February 2002

It became apparent to the TMWG members that it would be very beneficial to hold joint meetings with eBTWG since their work projects were utilizing UMM and had a high level of dependency. By having joint meetings members from both groups could work directly together instead of having to attend each other's meetings to communicate change requests or pass on clarifications. This was the driving factor for TMWG and eBTWG to hold its first joint meeting in Seattle.

After having had a joint meeting with the business process (BP) members of eBTWG it was decided that the next revision needed to not only address the issues outstanding from the Hong Kong meeting, but also to address the issue of terminology. UMM was using very different terms from most users. In some cases UMM was creating new terms because of it having entered new territory. In addition to these general issues, feedback was received from the eBTWG BP experts on some minor unclear areas within the meta model. All in all it was a very positive meeting that allowed both sides to exchange their views and work towards a better understanding of what (a) UMM is trying to do, and (b) what the first level of users (BP experts creating meta standards based on the meta model of UMM) require. In addition, since many eBTWG members are also the true users of the eBTWG specification, and therefore UMM, it not only was an exchange of conceptual ideas but also allowed learning about the practical aspects and requirements.

The final result of the meeting being that work on revision 11 stopped and, instead, work on revision 12 started. This revision will be written in language more easily understood by a layperson. Further, instead of having the meta model broken up into many different pieces and spread throughout out the document, the complete meta model will be placed in an annex. There is general agreement that UMM can be described without knowing anything about the meta model that lies underneath. Normal users of UMM do not need to know or understand the meta model. However, for the technical users, such as the creators of the ebXML related BP and CC specification, being able to see have the meta model and reading about its details is important.

Election of Officers

Peter Wilson had informed TMWG that because of an increase in his responsibilities within his organization he would no longer be able to serve as Vice-chair. As a result TMWG elected Christian Huemer as the new Vice-chair. Christian has served as the TMWG Secretary. Rik Drummond was elected as the new TMWG Secretary.

TMWG would like to thank Peter Wilson for his years of service. Peter served as AS.1 Vice-chair as well. In all the years Peter has been the calm voice during stormy debates. TMWG will miss him and wishes him all the best and great success in his new responsibilities.

TMWG Concerns

TMWG has expressed full support for the CSG "Proposal for Future Structure and Organisation of the UN/CEFACT Permanent Working Groups". However, TMWG fully shares the concern, sentiments and recommendations expressed by eBTWG. In particular, there is general concern in the process to be used to resolve the last outstanding issues. There are suggestions that the current proposal (revision 12) be amended by the UN/CEFACT heads of delegation in order to accommodate requests from a few participants for complicated refinements to operating rules, meeting frequency or voting structures. TMWG fully supports the eBTWG comments that UN/CEFACT working groups always have been, and should continue to be, empowered to adopt and refine their own operating rules. If there are detailed issues to be resolved, the participants themselves are vastly better situated than the UN/CEFACT plenary to resolve them, and to develop a suitable and stable-working methods based on their own needs and expertise.