6 May 2003

ENGLISH ONLY

UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR TRADE FACILITATION AND ELECTRONIC BUSINESS
(UN/CEFACT)
**REPORT OF THE UN/CEFACT STEERING GROUP (CSG) CHAIR
TO THE UN/CEFACT PLENARY**

* * *

Submitted by the Chairman of the UN/CEFACT Steering Group (CSG) *

This report was prepared in accordance with the requirements for the UN/CEFACT Steering Group Chair to submit a report to each Plenary, as outlined in TRADE/R.650/Rev.2.

The Centre is invited to review and approve this document.

This document has been published without formal editing.

Introduction

1. As indicated in TRADE/R.650/Rev.2. (R.650/Rev.2), the Chair of the UN/CEFACT Steering Group (CSG) is required to submit a written report to each session of the Plenary on the Steering Group's activities, and on other relevant issues related to the operation of the empowered working groups. Accordingly, this report covers the work of the CSG since the March 2002 Plenary session. It includes items that provide background to the Plenary's deliberations at its May 2003 session but no items for approval. In order to assist delegations, this report is structured according to the order of the Plenary agenda but to avoid duplication, comments are not made against every agenda item.

2. Apart from a short review meeting immediately following the last Plenary, the CSG has met twice during the inter-sessional period each time for a period of four days. The first meeting was held in Berlin in October 2002, and the Chair of the CSG would like to thank the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) for hosting the meeting, and the second meeting was held in Geneva in February of this year. Further, a number of members of the CSG were present at the first UN/CEFACT Forum meeting in Geneva in September 2002, and at the second meeting in San Diego, USA, last March. In addition, they have progressed very considerable quantities of work over their email server.

3. More details of specific CSG meetings can be found in document TRADE/CEFACT/2003/4, which covers the May 2002 meeting, and documents TRADE/CEFACT/2003/3 and TRADE/CEFACT/2003/MISC.6, which respectively cover the October 2002, and the February 2003 meetings. Clearly the CSG could not function efficiently without a committed and effective secretariat and it has received support, sometimes in difficult circumstances, from members of the UN/ECE trade division especially with regard to the hosting of the first UN/CEFACT Forum. In particular, the CSG chair would like to record his thanks to Mr. Mika Vepsalainen, who has undertaken the work with commitment and energy.

Agenda item 3 & 4 – Report on the discussions with the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) regarding an External Support Service Provider (SSP) and a UN/CEFACT Intellectual Property Rights Policy (IPR)

4. In the past year, nearly all of the work of the CSG between the annual sessions has been focused on trying to find an effective mechanism within the UN system to obtain extra-budgetary resources for the work of UN/CEFACT empowered groups, (Heads of Delegation will recall the letter from the Plenary Chair in late November 2002) and to establish an IPR policy relevant to today's standards development environment. With regard to the acquisition of resources, and in particular the services of an SSP, a great deal of effort has been expended in identifying and investigating possible routes with the OLA, but so far without any success. However, at its October meeting the CSG did provisionally adopted an IPR policy, and subject to the comments of the OLA, are ready to recommend to the Plenary its adoption.

5. At its February 2003 meeting, the CSG considered the possible outcomes of its discussions with OLA regarding securing a SSP and adopting a relevant IPR policy. It came to the conclusion that notwithstanding the continuing discussions with the OLA, it was prudent to begin exploring alternative scenarios for UN/CEFACT rather than deferring investigation of those strategies pending the conclusion of the OLA discussions.

6. Accordingly, the CSG established two study groups charged with evaluating the worst case "what if" scenarios:

1. What would UN/CEFACT look like without the presence of eBusiness standards development activity? (Group A) and:

2. What alternatives exist for transitioning UN/CEFACT's eBusiness standards activity to other development environments and organizations? (Group B).

7. These reports represent a substantive amount of work by the CSG and they should be considered in full. The reports now form the appendices to the summary paper commissioned by the Plenary Chairman, "Consideration of UN/CEFACT Resource Requirements, Strategic Directions, and Organisation" (TRADE/CEFACT/2003/MISC.10)

8. This paper and its appendices focuses on issues that are at the very heart of UN/CEFACT's ability to continue to be effective and although, to avoid duplication, the conclusions and recommendations will not be repeated in this report, they do require fundamental consideration and subsequently clear decisions. These decisions will probably be taken at an extraordinary plenary in the Autumn, but because of the importance of the issues to the future of UN/CEFACT, it is very frustrating and disappointing to the CSG that after months of waiting, and despite every effort by the secretariat, at the time of writing this report no written guidance from the OLA has yet been received. .

Agenda item 5 – Endorsement of ebXML specifications

9. The plenary is fully aware of the significance of the ebXML initiative which has been undertaken in conjunction with the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards. (OASIS) Following, the approval of the specifications that make up the framework of ebXML in Vienna in May 2001, it was the intention of the CSG to ask for their endorsement as UN/CEFACT technical specifications at the May 2002 Plenary. Unfortunately, because of document processing issues that was not possible. Nevertheless, in addition to the two original specifications that were finalized in May 2001, a number of specifications from OASIS have completed their development phase. (Following the first phase of the project, the specifications have been finalized by each organization, working in a coordinated manner, taking responsibility for particular specifications and following their development and approval processes) Further one specification being developed by UN/CEFACT is at an advanced stage and should also be endorsed. The CSG strongly recommends the endorsement of these specifications. If endorsed, the Plenary may wish to instruct the CSG to develop the draft text for a UN/CEFACT Recommendation on the use of ebXML within governments, commerce and industry

Agenda Item 12 – Reports from the UN/CEFACT Forum

10. The UN/CEFACT Forum has now held two meetings and each empowered group is beginning to function well. Although there are still a number of procedures that need to be completed, particularly those relating to work flow between the groups, the transition from the former organisation has been accomplished efficiently. This is because of time and commitment shown by each of the Chairs, Mr. Ralph Berwanger (TBG), Mr. Michael Conroy (ICG), Ms Margaret Pemberton (ATG), Mr. Klaus-Dieter Naujok (TMG), Mr. David Marsh (LG), and the Chair of the Forum, Ms Melanie McCarthy. On behalf of the CSG, its Chair would like to thanks all of the above for their contribution and to also thank the Data Interchange Standards Association (DISA) of the USA for their continued support of the Forum and its Groups by offering email and web-site facilities, and not least by hosting the San Diego meeting.

11. The personal reports of the Chairs of the empowered groups will be discussed under this item and following the recent adoption of a Code of Conduct by the CSG, the Chair of the CSG has also now requested each empowered group to also implement the code of conduct. For information the code is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

Agenda Item 13 - Elections to the CSG

12. Given the uncertain nature of the future direction and strategy of UN/CEFACT, in his letter of 25 April 2003 to Heads of Delegations the Plenary Chairman announced his intention to ask the Plenary to extend the term of office of the current CSG by 12 months. If that is the wish of the Plenary then the majority of the current CSG have indicated their willingness to continue to serve, but three members who have all held various positions of responsibility within the organization and made an outstanding contribution first to UN/EDIFACT and subsequently to UN/CEFACT have either resigned recently, or have now decided to stand down. They are M. Pierre Georget of France, Mr. Alexander de Lijster of the Netherlands and Mr. Peter Wilson of the United Kingdom. The Chair of he CSG wishes to record his thanks to each of them for their very thoughtful and important contributions over many years, and to wish them every success in their chosen paths.

FUTURE CSG MEETING DATES

- 11-12 May 2003, Geneva
- 14-18 July 2003, Geneva
- 20-23 October 2003, Geneva

————————————

ANNEX

UN/CEFACT – Code of Conduct

As participants within UN/CEFACT's overall community of service we appreciate the significance of our work and its effect on the global business environment. As such we openly accept the personal obligations of our professions and commit to serve the best public interests. In so doing we do hereby commit to the highest of ethical and professional conduct and agree:

1. to treat all persons fairly, respectfully and equitably;

2. to respect the rights of privacy for all participants;

3. to take all reasonable care to ensure that our work and work products cause no avoidable damage or personal harm;

4. to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to disclose conflicts to affected parties when one does exist;

5. to avoid referencing and promoting our individual companies, organizations or affiliations during UN/CEFACT meetings and communications;

6. to respect the rights of all parties for freedom of access to information and communication;

7. to respect legitimate intellectual property rights, refrain from plagiarizing the work of others, and acknowledge the contributions of other parties;

8. to be forthright and realistic in stating claims or estimates;

9. to seek, accept, and offer honest assessments of technical work and acknowledge and correct errors;

10. to conduct all communications within the generally accepted framework of courtesy and civility; and

11. to encourage others to follow this code of conduct.

UN/CEFACT Conventions of Netiquette

UN/CEFACT supports the following conventions for email exchange. They are guidelines for improving the effectiveness of communications and to assist in avoiding unintended misunderstandings and interpretations.

1) **Use Email the Way You Want Everybody to Use it**
   You can significantly Influence the behavior of others -- even when you just write an email.

2) **Take Another Look Before You Send a Message**
   Don't send anything you don't want to receive.

3) **Quote Original Messages Properly in Replies**
   Make your email replies easy to read and understandable by quoting in a smart and useful manner.

4) **Be Careful with Irony in Emails**
   Avoid comments that could offend or confuse people of other cultures.

5) **Clean Up Emails Before Forwarding Them**
   Forwarding emails is a great way of sharing ideas, but make sure the original idea is not hidden in obfuscation.

6) **Wrap Lines at About 65 Characters**
   Make your messages a joy to read.

7) **Writing in All Caps is Like Shouting**
   Don't shout with your email (unless you must).

8) **Ask Before You Send Huge Attachments**
   Don't clog email systems without permission.

9) **"Smileys" Should Ring an Alarm**
   On e-mail, you cannot see people's faces. Therefore people often use symbols to make their points. Don't use them to say something you should not say.

10) **Avoid "Me Too" Messages**
   "Me too" is not enough.