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

Eleventh session, 20 – 23 June 2005

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

REPORT ON THE 5TH & 6TH UN/CEFACT FORUM MEETINGS

5th UN/CEFACT Forum
September 13-17, 2004
Washington DC

6th UN/CEFACT Forum
March 14-18, 2005
Kuala Lumpur

Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Forum Management Group

This document is for **information**

I Introduction

1. The UN/CEFACT Forum is the operational entity of the UN/CEFACT Plenary. It consists of five permanent groups managed by the Forum Management Group, which is governed by the Bureau. The UN/CEFACT Forum convenes twice a year in different parts of the world to have a week-long meeting of all permanent groups, working groups and project teams.

II 5th UN/CEFACT Forum – Washington DC, USA

2. On 13 September 2004 the Chair of the Forum Coordination Team welcomed some 250 participants to the 5th UN/CEFACT Forum Opening Plenary in the Sheraton Premiere Hotel at Tysons Corner, near Washington DC. She thanked the Data Interchange Standards Institute (DISA) for organizing this Forum and GEFEG and LMI for sponsoring the event. She also introduced the following lunchtime presentations that were to be made during the week:

- XML Naming and Design Rules
- Update of E-cert Ratification Project Team
- UMM Profile for UML
- Feasibility study on the application of the UMM and CCTS
- International Real Estate Standards
- UN/CEFACT Repository
- Global Business Registry/Repository Project
- UN/CEFACT ebXML Core Component Library Project

3. After the permanent groups had introduced their objectives for the week, the UNECE secretariat presented the implications for UN/CEFACT of the United Nations agenda for trade facilitation and electronic business. The main points were that UN/CEFACT should be more aware of the requirements for trade facilitation and should produce more tools. Using the benefits offered by Internet technology, the trade facilitation work done by UN/CEFACT over the years based on paper and UN/EDIFACT standards, could now be integrated with new Internet solutions.

4. The UN/CEFACT Legal Rapporteur explained the Intellectual Property Rights policy for UN/CEFACT. After years of negotiations there was still no acceptable IPR Policy. This threatened to seriously impede the work of the Forum, since some organizations, most notably technology vendors, would not be able to participate as long as the IPR situation remains unclear. During this Forum a number of meetings were planned to try to reach an acceptable solution.

5. The Bureau presented the results of the 10th UN/CEFACT Plenary and its decision on a new structure and organization. The main points were that the UN/CEFACT Steering Group (CSG) and the Forum Coordination Team (FCT) had been disbanded. There was now a Forum Management Group (FMG) that was responsible for the executive management of the permanent groups and the Forum as a whole. The FMG was governed by the Bureau, which consists of the UN/CEFACT Plenary Chair plus the five vice-chairs of the UN/CEFACT Plenary, a representative of the UNECE secretariat and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the FMG.

6. After the Bureau had presented its work plan and objectives, elections were held for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the FMG. The Forum nominated Francois Vuilleumier (Switzerland) to the position of Standards Liaison Rapporteur to the UN/CEFACT Plenary.

7. In the afternoon, the permanent groups convened their individual permanent group plenaries. At these plenaries each permanent group's work plan and objectives for the week were discussed in more detail and elections were held for new officers of the permanent groups and their working groups.

8. Following the elections on 13 September 2004, the Forum Management Group was constituted for a two-year period, as follows:

FMG Chair	Dick Raman	TIE Holding NV - The Netherlands
FMG Vice Chair	Sue Probert	SEPIAeb - United Kingdom
ATG Chair	Anders Grangard	GENCOD - EAN France
ICG Chair	Mike Conroy	SchlumbergerSema - France
LG Vice Chair	Klaus Brisch	Germany
TBG Chair	Jean-Luc Champion	Belgium
TBG Member	Gordon Cragge	SITPRO - United Kingdom
TBG Member	Yves Gailly	Banque BNP-Paribas - France
TMG Chair	Gunther Stuhec	SAP - Germany

9. Later that day the first FMG meeting was held. The UN/CEFACT Bureau, as ex-officio members of the FMG was also represented. It quickly became clear that this was a completely new group, with a new mandate, new members and a heavy workload. The main task was to make the UN/CEFACT Forum effective in order to restore confidence in the Forum, both that of the members as well as that of the outside world.

10. To avoid further confusion, the first decision the FMG made was to abolish the term 'Business Collaboration Framework (BCF)' and to attempt to restore the relationship with the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) in order to continue work on ebXML. OASIS-UN/CEFACT cooperation was discussed in detail, the main issues being the Universal Business Language (UBL) and the Business Process Specification Schema (BPSS). The UN/CEFACT Plenary decisions that affected the FMG were reviewed and plans were made to provide the required documents. External relationships are very important and will be dealt with in coordination with the Bureau.

11. The FMG needs a new website, and DISA extended its offer to host the Forum websites. The harmonization of procedures and work programmes in the light of the new management structure needs to be undertaken. The IPR issue is of great concern to the Forum as a whole. Plans were made to migrate the work on UNeDocs from the UNECE secretariat and SITPRO.

12. A lengthy discussion was conducted on sponsoring. The FMG will need funding to properly carry out its tasks and promote the work of UN/CEFACT. It was decided not to pursue the idea of a Service Provider but instead to look for multiple sponsors to finance a United Nations Trust Fund and thereby to fund the required activities in this way.

13. The projects currently undertaken by the Forum were reviewed and new projects approved. It was agreed to conduct monthly conference calls for the FMG. Finally arrangements were made for the March 2005 Forum, to be held in Kuala Lumpur, hosted by Royal Malaysian Customs.

14. A special taskforce was created to tackle the harmonization of the Permanent group procedures under the leadership of the Chair of TBG17, who was co-opted onto the FMG for the duration of the project. The cooperation between the different groups improved greatly. Especially, TMG had many joint meetings with other groups.

15. The first set of Core Components was delivered, which are the basic semantic elements required for electronic transactions. In the coming years this library will be extended with the business know-how of the many industry experts involved in the Forum.

16. The Forum endorsed business specifications for electronic tendering in engineering and construction and for an electronic Certificate of Origin for agricultural products, as well as new developments for the codification of business processes, such as supply-chain processes for the

Aerospace and Defence industry and the revision of the UNTDED/ISO 7372 standard. It also announced the completion of the 'Single Window Recommendation', which encourages Governments and those involved in international trade and transport to establish a facility for lodging standardized information and documents to fulfil all import, export and transit-related regulatory procedures. Finally, the Forum adopted the ebXML standard from OASIS for the implementation of the UN/CEFACT registry-repository.

17. During the Closing Plenary the permanent group chairs presented the progress that had been made during the week and the Bureau presented their work plan. The Chair of the FMG then informed the Forum that good progress had been made on the IPR issue. He proceeded to stress the importance of increasing the effectiveness of the Forum so that deliverables could be produced faster, in order to satisfy market demand. The sponsorship programme was announced, which should provide adequate funding for the necessary work. Finally he announced the next Forum in Malaysia and sent everyone off with the message that a new wind is blowing in the UN/CEFACT Forum that will demonstrate to the world that UN/CEFACT will produce results.

III Work conducted between the Forum conventions.

18. During October 2004 and March 2005 a lot of work was done by the FMG. A number of important decisions were made during the monthly conference calls as well as a face-to-face meeting in January 2005 in Geneva, hosted by the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).

19. First of all an agreement was made with OASIS to pick up where we left off in 2003. This agreement was presented to the meeting of the e-Business MoU in its November 2004 meeting in Burlington (MA), USA, where the FMG was represented. Secondly, a sponsorship proposal was agreed and a draft brochure was prepared for approval by the UNECE. Thirdly, it was agreed to bring UNeDocs as a project into the Forum.

20. Much work was done on the trade facilitation strategy and the e-Business strategy. A new revision of the Mandate and Terms of Reference of UN/CEFACT (TRADE/R.650/Rev.4) was prepared, so as to reflect the new management structure of the Forum. Preparations were made for the next Forum in Kuala Lumpur. Some improvements to the programme were agreed and the logistics were coordinated with the host Royal Malaysian Customs.

21. One point of concern was that the Chair of the Legal group had never attended any FMG meeting, in spite of several attempts to contact him.

IV 6th UN/CEFACT Forum – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

22. On Sunday 13 March 2005 the FMG convened to make the final preparations for the Forum. Already then it became clear that this Forum was organized in a superb manner. The provision of meeting room facilities and food was marvellous, there was wireless Internet access and beamers in all meeting rooms and plenty of helpful people around to assist the Forum delegates.

23. The Forum was hosted by Royal Malaysian Customs who were also the main sponsors and the meeting was endorsed by the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU, a unit linked to the Prime Minister's Office). The official sponsors were: Danang Net, TIME.com, DoReMi, eDaran, gCommerce, Pernec and Axway.

24. The Opening Plenary had a slightly different format than in previous Forum meetings. The Opening Plenary was shortened to fit the Permanent group plenaries into the morning, thereby leaving the first afternoon available for Permanent Group meetings.

25. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia, as co-organizer of the Forum, explained the recent progress made by AFACT, the Asian branch of UN/CEFACT. Then the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor was introduced by Ms. Gayah Gulam Haidar, a senior manager of the Multimedia Development Corporation. This project started over 10 years ago as part of Malaysia's 'Vision 2020', which was set up to bring the Malaysian economy to a higher level through the use of advanced technology. The project has made great progress and this e-Government project sets an example for many countries around the globe.
26. The Bureau explained the latest draft of the proposed IPR policy. Following the public review of the principles for IPR in UN/CEFACT, a draft policy has now been delivered by the special contact group. This policy is to be discussed with the UN Office of Legal Affairs and it is hoped that it can be adopted at the next UN/CEFACT Plenary in June 2005. The Bureau presented their programme for the week and called for nominations for Chair of the UN/CEFACT Plenary.
27. This presentation was followed by an explanation by the FMG Chair of the achievements of the new FMG in their first six months and the future objectives of the FMG and the Forum. He gave an overview of the programme for the week, which included four Lunch & Learn presentations and two training sessions. He then presented an overview of the work to be conducted by the permanent groups, who then proceeded to have their group plenaries.
28. During the week the first five business requirement specifications were approved and 30 Data Maintenance Requests for UN/EDIFACT were processed. Further steps were agreed to bring UBL into the Forum and to jointly progress the work on BPSS in OASIS. Two new working groups were established; TBG2 for digital paper solutions including the UNeDocs project and TBG18 for the agricultural sector. The Trade Facilitation and eBusiness Strategy documents were finalized, as was the UN/CEFACT Mandate and Terms of Reference (R.650/Rev.4).
29. In conjunction with the Forum, a Trade Facilitation Capacity Building workshop was organized, at which some 80 regional delegates attended. Many officials and experts from the Forum were involved here and this interaction was very beneficial. It was decided that in future these workshops could benefit more from the involvement of Forum experts and that such events highlighted that Trade Facilitation is in fact the underlying theme for UN/CEFACT work as a whole.
30. There is a new spirit in the Forum. During the Closing Plenary it became clear from the reports of the Permanent groups and the Bureau that a lot had been achieved. There are still some open issues, such as IPR, harmonization and marketing, but overall it became apparent that the new management structure is working well and that people realize that it is not political games, but cooperation that make the Forum effective.
31. Many words of thanks were spoken to the organizers and the 15 people that were present all week to assist us received a token of our appreciation. In fact this Forum sets the standard for what constitutes an effective working environment for the Forum. The next Forum was announced to be in Lyon, France, from 26 to 30 September 2005. The March 2006 forum is planned for Vancouver, Canada.
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