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ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS
Support to Transition Economies for the Implementation
of UN/CEFACT Standards and Recommendations

Report of the UNECE Regional Adviser on Trade^{1*}

I. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

1. During 2007-2008 the UNECE Regional Adviser on Trade concentrated on the following technical assistance activities:

(a) Four workshops in South East Europe (SEE) and the EurAsEC (Euro Asian Economic Cooperation) countries were organized in Moscow, Ohrid, Almaty and Belgrade to kick off two initiatives on trade data harmonization and the Single Window. These initiatives build on the use of the United Nations *Trade Data Element Directory* (UNTDDED),

* This document was submitted late due to resource constraints.

¹ Following Resolution 2803 (XXVI) of the General Assembly dated 14 December 1971, a regional advisory services component was added to the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC) of the United Nations. Currently, the UNECE has six Regional Advisers, among which the Adviser on Trade provides an annual report to the UNECE Committee on Trade and its related subsidiary bodies.

Recommendation 33 (the Single Window), the various codes and other recommendations of UN/CEFACT, as well as the ongoing work on draft Recommendation 34 and the Core Components Library. Interest among the participating countries rose significantly because of these workshops and a number began implementation activities. The direct results include three countries starting to implement Single Window projects (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan), one strengthening its work on a Single Window (Serbia) and many others (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and others) taking decisions to establish such projects. All recipient countries and partner agencies (e.g. World Customs Organization, European Commission, United States Customs and Border Protection) appreciated the results and strongly support the idea of continuing work on these initiatives;

(b) The provision of training on trade facilitation and national trade and transport facilitation bodies (UN/CEFACT Recommendation 4) in the transition economies (notably in Southeast Europe, the SPECA² countries and Ukraine). Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan, in particular, expressed high satisfaction with these activities;

(c) Advisory services were provided on specific topics upon request from Member States with economies in transition. Typically, these services lead to training and implementation activities in the countries and were well accepted (notably by the Russian Federation, Bulgaria and Kyrgyzstan, as well as GTZ³ and the Government of Germany, the Asian Development Bank and USAID on the donor side). As a result of these activities a number of donor agencies have started financing projects for the implementation of UN/CEFACT standards (Recommendation 4 in Kyrgyzstan, Recommendation 33 and other recommendations and standards in countries including the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan);

(d) Assistance in the preparation of strategies for trade facilitation and e-business implementation, which cite the UN/CEFACT standards and instruments, and which were adopted and implemented in the eSEE initiative in Southeastern Europe, and in specific countries, such as Croatia, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan;

(e) Capacity-building workshops on trade facilitation negotiations in the WTO for eight former Soviet countries (which provided analytical studies and strengthened the network of trade facilitation negotiators in these countries). Azerbaijan requested a national seminar on this topic, organized in January 2007. Kyrgyzstan and Moldova used the results of these activities in their activities and documents submitted in the multilateral trade negotiations.

2. In 2007, the regional adviser organized demand driven training workshops and advisory services in 19 countries with 265 participants.

² Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

³ *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit.*

II. FEEDBACK

3. There was great interest shown by the national co-organizers, notably among specialists on data harmonization and the Single Window, who expressed the highest level of satisfaction among participants in these activities. Those interlocutors, who found a niche to develop their projects on the basis of input from the regional adviser were the most satisfied. Experts and donor agencies working on the Single Window were also very pleased.

4. Participants were also very satisfied in the training sessions for WTO negotiators on trade facilitation. An active network among the CIS negotiators was created.

5. Satisfaction was also expressed by participants in the more general awareness-raising activities on the standards and recommendations – although they were not as enthusiastic as the participants in the first two activities.

6. The greatest satisfaction was shown by those who had the possibility to receive concrete input on concrete issues, as requested by the recipient countries.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

7. UNECE clients, partners and interlocutors in the transition countries (and sometimes transition and developing countries outside our region) are primarily interested in contributions to practical implementation activities (rather than broad policy issues). They were very interested, for example, in the Single Window (including training on our trade facilitation Recommendation 33, the Single Window), and the topics of draft Recommendation 34 (data harmonization); and Recommendation 35 (legal aspects of the Single Window and data harmonization). The participants in the workshops, representatives of government agencies, partner regional organizations, and donor-funded projects on trade facilitation requested the finalization of the draft recommendations on data harmonization and the legal aspects of establishing a Single Window (draft Recommendations 34 and 35) as a priority area for UN/CEFACT.

8. The countries made use of Recommendation 33 (as witnessed by the Presidential Decree on establishing a Single Window in Mongolia, which cites Rec.33 as its source, and by the Single Window projects in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (which follow the approach of Mongolia), as well as the Single Window projects in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. The participants in the training activities expressed the opinion that the future recommendations on data harmonization and the legal aspects of the Single Window are urgently needed, and should be practical and prepared in an accessible language (as in Recommendation 33). As witnessed from the reports of the training workshops with EurAsEC and the correspondence in the preparation for the next event (St. Petersburg, 24-26 September 2008), the partners in EurAsEC expressed their willingness to have user-friendly instruments (recommendations) on data harmonization and the legal aspects of the Single Window and the Single Administrative Document.

9. As also witnessed, in reports from meetings with government officials and practical trade facilitation projects in the transition economies, these countries are mostly interested in the work of UNECE and UN/CEFACT on trade procedures: simplifying trade and transport procedures, cutting red tape in trade information exchange, streamlining border-crossing procedures (see for example GTZ projects on trade facilitation in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which are focused on cutting document requirements and red tape). The interest of these countries in e-business standards is focused on their practical implementation in support of simplified trade procedures, as stated in requests for cooperation by EurAsEC, the Governments of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.
