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Item 5

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**Progress in the implementation of the Executive Committee's  
recommendations concerning the United Nations Centre for Trade  
Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)**

**Final report**

# Report to EXCOM

Prepared by the UNECE secretariat and the UN/CEFACT Bureau

## *Summary*

This paper responds to the request from the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) in December 2011 for a final report on the activities undertaken by UN/CEFACT together with the UNECE secretariat in implementing recommendations of the twenty-ninth session of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), which was held in February 2009. It covers the period from February 2009 to November 2012.

All of the EXCOM recommendations have been fully implemented.

Specific action taken in response to each recommendation is summarized in a tabular form within the report for ease of reference.

Over the period, a more streamlined organizational structure for UN/CEFACT was achieved, providing for a more project-oriented framework aimed at timely delivery of recommendations and standards focused on stakeholders' needs.

UN/CEFACT has also enhanced its communication efforts. This included improving the circulation and exchange of information inside the UN/CEFACT community through a new online forum, greater use of internal web-based tools to facilitate interaction among experts around the world and more timely communication about developments, especially relating to UN/CEFACT forums.

Detailed annexes provide a report on the action taken in response to specific recommendations on enhancing the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT (annex A) and on the capacity-building and promotional work to enhance the implementation of UN/CEFACT instruments (annexes B and C).

There appears to be a deep, substantial and sustainable increase in participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT over the period and a substantial increase in implementation of UNECE recommendations, such as Recommendation 33 on Single Window.

The World Bank reports that Single Window has been implemented in 71 countries around the world (World Bank *Doing Business Report 2013*). It is estimated that in the next five years 100 countries will have a Single Window in place, of which 60 will link all relevant government agencies (CrimsonLogic UN regional commissions Global Trade Facilitation Conference).

The current report will be reviewed by EXCOM at its session on 10 December 2012.

## **I. Introduction**

This report reviews action taken by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and the UNECE secretariat from February 2009 to November 2012 to implement the recommendations of the twenty-ninth session of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), held on 27 February 2009.<sup>1</sup> Specific actions undertaken in response to each of the EXCOM recommendations are outlined in tabular form for ease of reference.

Two annexes cover activities of the UNECE secretariat over the period regarding the participation of transition economies in trade facilitation (annex A) and capacity-building (annexes B and C).

As the new UN/CEFACT organizational arrangements have matured over the past months, priority has been given by the UN/CEFACT Bureau and the UNECE secretariat towards closer collaboration, particularly to benefit member States through a strengthened programme of outreach and capacity-building documentation, e.g. implementation guides to be developed by UN/CEFACT for their standards.

## **II. Background**

EXCOM's recommendations covered six key areas:

- (a) Information-sharing and communication to foster broader transparency and participation;
- (b) Intergovernmental governance and oversight of the work of UN/CEFACT, including strategy and priority setting and the use of the United Nations label;
- (c) Ensuring balance between UN/CEFACT's work on electronic business standards on the one hand and on Recommendations for trade facilitation on the other hand, with due reflection on the resource allocation;
- (d) Greater involvement of countries with economies in transition;
- (e) Capacity-building activities to promote implementation of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations;
- (f) Cooperation with other institutions.

EXCOM invited UN/CEFACT to provide an overall progress report on action on these recommendations no later than December 2012. An initial report was presented to EXCOM on 17 December 2009 (informal document 2009/37) and two updates presented on 16 December 2010 (informal document 2010/26) and on 12 December 2011 (informal document 2011/29).

The current report covers the full period February 2009 to November 2012.

## **III. Action taken to implement EXCOM decisions: February 2009 to November 2012**

UN/CEFACT's ongoing efforts to address EXCOM's recommendations have been strengthened by Plenary decisions since February 2009, notably those which have allowed for a more streamlined project-oriented organizational structure within its continuing mandate.

UN/CEFACT's work is driven by the Plenary-approved programme of work and the streamlined structure puts the central focus of management attention on the strategic development, practical implementation and

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<sup>1</sup> See "Recommendations concerning the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business" (ECE/EX/4).

<sup>2</sup> See "Revised mandate, terms of reference and procedures" for UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.2).

governance of that programme. In particular, the structure provides for a more manageable organization of tasks and processes that fosters transparency and facilitates timely project-deliverables to address critical needs of member States and other stakeholders.

The elections for vice-chairs at the July 2011 Plenary, set the stage for the Bureau to take its responsibilities forward within the framework of the existing programme of work and with the goal of making use of the new structure to develop and to maintain high-quality recommendations and standards in trade facilitation and electronic business.

The majority of the Bureau's vice-chairs are from government, others are from the private sector and international organizations. They have a broad range of skills in management, technology, communication and expertise in domains such as agriculture, customs, defence, procurement, product identification, supply chain, tax, trade facilitation and transport. Several have worked in, or collaborated with, regional and international organizations - as well as organizations developing standards - and in capacity-building and are intent on outreach to others in order to focus on priorities and to take steps to reduce duplication of effort. The vice-chairs, who serve for three-year terms of office, have experience in the challenges of developing and transition economies and were put forward by the heads of delegation from Australia, Belarus, France, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

As part of the Bureau's transitional steps, due diligence was taken with respect to all EXCOM's recommendations: information-sharing and communication, governance, balance in programme activities, enhanced involvement of countries with economies in transition, capacity-building and cooperation with other institutions. It is also clear that the Bureau considered outreach as a fundamental principle that can foster greater participation from a wider range of countries from around the world and their experts in the public and private sectors.

The first UN/CEFACT Forum of experts organized under the new structure, was the 18<sup>th</sup> UN/CEFACT Forum, held on 19-23 September 2011. It involved first steps towards addressing a wide range of strategic and project-oriented issues concerning the current and future programme of work, as well as critical maintenance and operational tasks.

The exchange of views was organized through an initial set of five broad programme development areas, led by the vice-chairs: (a) trade and transport facilitation, (b) supply chain, (c) regulatory, (d) sectoral and (e) methodology and technology.

Key business domains supporting UN/CEFACT's activities currently involve experts in agriculture, accounting and audit, customs, e-government, environmental management, finance and payments, insurance, international trade procedures, procurement, supply chain management, transport, travel and tourism. A roster of experts also helps to identify those willing and able to take up specific programme support tasks, e.g. communication.

Communication has been a top priority in Bureau activities. This has included enhanced communications to heads of delegation and experts, the creation of an online forum, greater use of web-based tools to foster interaction among experts around the world, the launch of videos to show UN/CEFACT "Success Stories" via the UNECE YouTube space, and the involvement of UN/CEFACT experts in the new UNECE outreach initiative. Moreover, the Bureau is finalizing a note on communication strategy to further strengthen these efforts.

The implementation of EXCOM's recommendations has followed extensive discussions during the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary and 18<sup>th</sup> Forum. During the 18th Plenary, held from 15-17 February 2012, the Bureau also carried out further consultations with member States and other stakeholders. Documents were prepared in the three official UNECE languages to permit consideration of issues in national capitals in advance of the 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary session as well as an exchange of views involving the Bureau and delegations before the Plenary.

The Plenary agenda covered a wide range of topics, including procedural matters, strategic directions, panel discussions concerning challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business (involving representatives from government, national, regional and international institutions, the private sector and organisations engaged in the development of standards) and the Programme of Work for 2012-2013.

This effort to strengthen the organization of UN/CEFACT activities continued during the two UN/CEFACT Forums held in 2012 (16 - 20 April in Geneva and on 17 - 19 September in Vienna).

Efforts to enhance the participation of transition economies in the work have also been very effective. For example, by establishing contacts with the CIS regional organization of the ministries of communications (RCC: Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications) and following up on awareness events at RCC, experts from RCC were eventually engaged in efforts to revise UN/CEFACT recommendations (see annex A). Moreover, capacity-building efforts have yielded positive results (see annex B).

Further, the capacity-building programme has yielded very positive results. The UNECE secretariat has received in writing expressions of appreciation coming from several Member States.

Specific action taken to implement each of the EXCOM recommendations is summarized in the table below in a format that identifies: the EXCOM item number, text of the recommendation and the action taken from February 2009 to November 2012.

#### IV. More detailed specific actions undertaken in response to the EXCOM recommendations

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
<b>A: Information-sharing and communication to foster broader transparency and participation</b>			
A (i)	Develop, with the support of the secretariat, a more user-friendly website to include the following information:		
A (i) (a)	Summary details on projects (including such items as project initiator, participants, extra budgetary resources mobilized, supporters, expected deliverables, timeframe, current status, how newcomers can participate, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The UN/CEFACT Website was substantially upgraded to provide direct access to project information - see <a href="http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/projects/current-projects.html">www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/projects/current-projects.html</a> and <a href="http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/projects/completed-projects.html">www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/projects/completed-projects.html</a></li> <li>Further, the website provides a summary list of completed projects and projects in the ongoing maintenance phase (directories, code lists etc.) – see respectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UN/EDIFACT: <a href="http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/standards/unedifact/directories/download.html">www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/standards/unedifact/directories/download.html</a></li> <li>- UN/LOCODE: <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html">www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html</a></li> <li>- CCL Library: <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/codesfortrade/uncccl/ccl_index.html">www.unece.org/cefact/codesfortrade/uncccl/ccl_index.html</a></li> <li>- XML Schemas: <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/xml_schemas/index">www.unece.org/cefact/xml_schemas/index</a></li> <li>- Recommendations: <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.html">www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.html</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Completed
A (i) (b)	Consolidated, summary information about UN/CEFACT procedures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All information on UN/CEFACT policies, procedures and policies is now provided in one place on the website in all three official languages - see <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/cf_docs.html">www.unece.org/cefact/cf_docs.html</a></li> </ul>	Completed
A (i) (c)	Simple, clear and concise information on UN/CEFACT policy and decision-making processes, especially related to the identification, selection and development of standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All information on UN/CEFACT procedures and policies is provided in one place on the website in all three official languages - see <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/cf_docs.html">www.unece.org/cefact/cf_docs.html</a></li> </ul> <p>This includes a summary document for delegates on the new UN/CEFACT structure and procedures (document number ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2012/9).</p>	Completed
A (i) (d)	Information on UN/CEFACT Heads of Delegation (HoD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A full list of all HoD is available on the website at <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/forum_grps/Secretariat/HoDList.html">www.unece.org/cefact/forum_grps/Secretariat/HoDList.html</a></li> </ul>	Completed
A (ii)	Provide a registry and tracking system for project proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included in the project website (see A (i)(a)). All project proposals are listed on the website in the context of progress within the Open Development Process (ODP).</li> <li>The revamped website and project database mentioned above under A (i) (a) provide a registry and tracking system for project</li> </ul>	Completed

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
		proposals.	
<b>B: Intergovernmental governance and oversight of the work of UN/CEFACT, including strategy and priority setting and the use of the United Nations label</b>			
B (i)	Continue to enhance the transparency of the UN/CEFACT policy and management process through which decisions are made on the selection of specific standards for development. In this regard, the proposed standards should respond to a minimum of common interest expressed through support by at least three countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The “three-country rule” and related procedures for approval of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations has been applied, retroactive to 1 January 2010. The procedure was formally approved at the 16th Plenary and incorporated into the revised UN/CEFACT mandate and terms of reference. Please see: Revised open development process, Part II, A. paragraph 14 <a href="http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_plenary/plenary10/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC_T2010_24E.pdf">www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_plenary/plenary10/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC_T2010_24E.pdf</a></li> <li>In addition, a UN/CEFACT wiki website was established with a section on Bureau Information, including the discussions and decisions of the Bureau (All UN/CEFACT participants can access the wiki space using individual login names and passwords that are provided by the UNECE secretariat)</li> </ul>	Completed
B (ii)	Encourage meaningful participation of member States in the development of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable work has been done to enhance the participation of member States, and especially transition economies, in the work of UN/CEFACT. This has been quite successful and is summarized in section D below, with a full report in annexes A, B and C.</li> <li>Some key examples of this work are listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special session at the November 2012 Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum to enhance the participation of countries in UN/CEFACT work.</li> <li>Information on UN/CEFACT standards is regularly disseminated through the UNECE multiplier point network and through the new (since 2011) UN/CEFACT "news web page" (in three UNECE languages).</li> <li>Capacity-building events were held in 2009 at the UN/CEFACT Forum meetings in Rome and Sapporo, for local and regional experts; detailed briefing sessions were held during the 2010 Geneva UN/CEFACT Forum for diplomatic staff in Geneva and experts from a number of Transition Economies to explain and promote UN/CEFACT's standards &amp; recommendations and to encourage wider participation in UN/CEFACT's work.</li> <li>Direct promotion to individual member States through UNECE's capacity-building and transition economy programmes (See annexes A and B) a strategic capacity-building plan (Informal Document 2009/7) and integrated strategic action plan (Informal Document 2009/8) was presented to EXCOM in 2009.</li> <li>The 15th UN/CEFACT Plenary, held on 9 -12 November 2009, included 4 stakeholder sessions as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder Needs and Priorities</li> <li>Policy Drivers for the Development of Trade Facilitation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Completed  Efforts to engage even more Member States and stakeholders are an ongoing exercise.

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
		<p>Instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity Building and the Implementation of Trade Facilitation Instruments</li> <li>Strategic Directions and the Next Steps</li> <li>These resulted in a number of inputs which were presented in the report of the Annual Session (Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2009/28)</li> </ul>	
B (iii)	<p>Ensure that priorities expressed by member States (through UN/CEFACT plenary, bureau and other channels) are adequately taken up in the UN/CEFACT programme of work and effectively implemented. For this purpose, the UN/CEFACT Plenary should agree upon priorities at each annual session and ask the Bureau to oversee their implementation and to report to the Plenary on their status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing with the established practice of opening the Plenary sessions with a review of priorities of Member States, followed by discussion and reports on impact on programme of work, and monitoring and reporting on status</li> <li>A matrix of the needs expressed by delegates at the 14th and 15th sessions, along with the 2008 survey of member States' priorities, was mapped to the Programme of Work 2010 – 2011 to identify any gaps. This document was presented to the 16th Plenary for information in Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/7 - <a href="http://www.unece.org/cefact/cf_plenary/plenary10/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFACT_2010_7E.pdf">www.unece.org/cefact/cf_plenary/plenary10/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFACT_2010_7E.pdf</a></li> <li>The UN/CEFACT Programme of Work for 2012 – 2013, indicating key priority areas and projects, was approved by the 18th Plenary in February 2012. Implementation of the Programme of Work is ongoing.</li> <li>Progress in implementing the Programme of Work is reported at each Plenary.</li> </ul>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Implementation of the Programme of Work is ongoing</p>
<b>C: Ensure balance between UN/CEFACT's work on electronic business standards on the one hand and on Recommendations for trade facilitation on the other hand, with due reflection on the resource allocation</b>			
C (i)	<p>To take steps to further strengthen the development of trade facilitation Recommendations and to promote their implementation through promotion initiatives, such as publications, seminars or workshops, with particular attention to the needs of countries in transition.</p>	<p>Considerable work was done over the period on the development and enhancement of new Trade Facilitation Recommendations. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 34: Data Simplification and Standardization for International Trade (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/13) was approved by the 16th Plenary.</li> <li>Recommendation 35: Establishing a legal framework for international trade Single Window (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/23/Rev. 2) was approved intersessionally in October 2010.</li> <li>Recommendation 36 on Single Window interoperability is currently under development.</li> <li>Revision of Recommendation 14 on Authentication of Trade Documents by Means Other than Signature was started in August 2012.</li> <li>Promotion and capacity building efforts are summarized in Section D and E below and detailed reports are presented in annex A and B</li> </ul>	<p>Action plan completed</p> <p>The implementation is ongoing</p>

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
<b>D: Greater involvement of countries with economies in transition</b>			
D (i)	Develop a strategic action plan and implement specific actions, in collaboration with the secretariat, to facilitate the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT, and especially to enable their experts to contribute substantively to the elaboration of standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strategic plan was developed and approved by the 2009 Plenary (ECE/TRADE/ C/CEFACT/2009/4).</li> <li>• UNECE has undertaken a number of capacity-building activities in transition economies under the UN Development Account and in collaboration with UNESCAP. Annex B contains a detailed account of these activities.</li> <li>• Working under the Regional Programme for Capacity-Building, the UNECE Regional Adviser has organized a number of projects, workshops, initiatives and studies promoting the implementation of UN/CEFACT Recommendations and standards in transition economies. Annex C contains a report on this work.</li> <li>• The secretariat also is taking steps to include UN/CEFACT/UNECE trade facilitation and e-business recommendations, standards and tools in curricula of educational institutions in transition economies (using relevant materials and modules).</li> <li>• Agreement was reached in November 2012 with the St. Petersburg Institute of International Business and Law which has educational programmes for customs officers to provide trade facilitation training (using the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide) to Customs Training Institutes in CIS. Discussions are underway with the Russian Academy on Standardization, Metrology and Certification and their branch in Kyrgyzstan to organize similar training in Central Asia.</li> <li>• Secretariat actions also focused on the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT and undertook a number of actions to enhance their participation in work of UN/CEFACT. See annex A for details of the additional work undertaken by the secretariat from December 2010 to November 2012 to further advanced the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT.</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT provided a technical training session, particularly for experts from transition and developing economies during the Geneva Forum in September 2010. It was attended by 23 participants from 9 countries.</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT participated in the seminar "Trade Development and Facilitation for Economies in Transition" organized by the UNECE Committee on Trade in October 2009.</li> </ul>	<p>Action plan completed</p> <p>The implementation is ongoing</p>

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
D (ii)	Take steps, with the support of the secretariat, for information about all key UN/CEFACT recommendations and standards to be translated into Russian.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All new Recommendations are provided in all three official languages as a matter of form, including the latest revised and new Recommendations from UN/CEFACT (Recommendations 5, 34 and 35) The latest approved Recommendations from UN/CEFACT (Recommendation 34 and 35) have been translated into the three official languages.</li> <li>Funding was secured by the secretariat for translating key documents into Russian with input from the Russian mission to identify priorities. These included Recommendations 9, 15 and 17 and also the Single Window Case Studies for Korea and Singapore.</li> <li>All new documents for decision or noting by the Plenary are now regularly translated into all three official languages.</li> <li>The new Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) will be available in English, French and Russian.</li> </ul>	Completed
<b>E: Capacity-building activities to promote implementation of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations</b>			
E (i)	In collaboration with the secretariat, develop an integrated strategic capacity-building plan on the use and implementation of UN/CEFACT instruments, and initiate supporting actions, with particular attention to the needs of transition economies. The secretariat should have the key role in implementing this plan and undertaking relevant capacity-building activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An integrated strategic capacity-building plan was developed by approved by the 2009 Plenary (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2009/4).</li> <li>The secretariat has given presentations at 6<sup>th</sup> sessions of the OSCE Staff Border Management College in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in 2011-2012 to promote trade facilitation instruments and recommendations.</li> <li>A UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide with accompanying training material was developed with financial assistance from the Swedish Development Agency, Sida. It was officially launched in October 2012 and initial feedback from stakeholders has been very positive.</li> <li>Workshop on UN/CEFACT tools and instruments for experts from the CIS ministries of communications, 1 October 2012, Geneva. Annex A contains a complete report on this work.</li> <li>A presentation on UN/CEFACT standards was given to a meeting of the Permanent Commission on Economy and Finance of the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, October 2011, St. Petersburg, Russia;</li> <li>Seminar on information standards for the CIS standards bodies, May 2011, Turkmenistan;</li> <li>A presentation on UN/CEFACT standards was given to a meeting of the Commission on Informatization of RCC (Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications), April 2011, Minsk, Belarus;</li> <li>The secretariat promoted UN/CEFACT Standards and Recommendations in various meetings held to support transition economy countries. Annexes A and C contains a report on this work.</li> <li>UNECE, following a request from the European Union, is assisting</li> </ul>	<p>Completed</p> <p>The Implementation is ongoing</p>

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
		<p>the Greek Government in developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy and road map for trade facilitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The secretariat undertook capacity building activities under the UN Development Account and in collaboration with UNESCAP, through the joint UN regional commission initiative on trade facilitation. Annex B contains a report on this work.</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT Capacity Building events at Forum meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rome, April 2009</li> <li>– Sapporo, October 2009</li> <li>– Geneva, September 2010</li> <li>– Geneva, September 2011</li> <li>– Geneva, March 2012</li> <li>– Vienna, September 2012</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>F: Cooperation with other institutions</b>			
F (i)	Explore areas for enhanced cooperation between UN/CEFACT and other institutions, especially in the framework of the Trade Facilitation Negotiations of the World Trade Organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) was undertaken with input and strong support from the WCO, WB, ITC, UNCTAD, OECD and WTO. It provides links to available TF instruments for all Trade Facilitation measures currently under negotiation at the WTO. The TFIG was presented at the WTO in October 2012 to strong acclaim by members.</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT cooperates very closely with the World Customs Organization, in particular, with regard to the trade facilitation and e-Business standards requirements of WCO, customs in general, and alignment of the WCO data model and the UN/CEFACT core component library. The secretariat works closely with the WCO also on single window implementation issues</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT cooperates closely with UNCTAD in a number of areas, including customs systems (ASYCUDA), organization of joint events. One example was the Forum on WTO, Trade Facilitation and the Private Sector in Developing Countries held in February 2010.</li> <li>• In 2009-2012, working contacts were established with key regional standards-setting regional organizations in the CIS (Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications and CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification). Annex A contains a detailed account of these activities.</li> <li>• Close cooperation has been established with the European Commission Task Force for Greece the context of assisting to develop a Trade Facilitation Strategy.</li> <li>• In the capacity-building initiatives organized by the UNECE Regional Adviser, synergies and close collaboration were established with the European Commission, the WCO, EurAsEC, the Commission of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, UNCTAD (ASYCUDA), the Regional Cooperation Council for Southeast Europe, GTZ, WTO, various national authorities (such as</li> </ul>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Further efforts ongoing</p>

EXCOM Item No.	EXCOM recommendations	Action taken February 2009 to November 2012	Comments
		<p>Customs) of UNECE Member States, UNU, UNDP, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The secretariat launched a joint initiative among UN regional commissions on trade facilitation.</li> <li>• Supporting this initiative, the secretariat secured a UN Development Account project involving all five regional commissions to help developing and transition economies to better integrate into regional and international supply chains based on the use of trade facilitation techniques. The first event under this project was held in Geneva in December 2011 – see website <a href="http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=26693">www.unece.org/index.php?id=26693</a></li> <li>• The secretariat is a core partner in the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade<sup>2</sup> (GFP) <a href="http://www.gfptt.org">www.gfptt.org</a></li> </ul>	

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<sup>2</sup> The Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP) is an alliance of international organizations active in involved in trade and transport facilitation.

## **Annex A**

### **Enhancing the participation of transition economies**

#### **1. Introduction**

This paper presents the work undertaken by UNECE over the period February 2009 - November 2012 to deliver on the recommendations of EXCOM to enhance the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT and to encourage the implementation of trade facilitation instruments in these countries. The report is presented in two parts. Part 1 presents the issues and environment related to the engagement of transition economies in this work. Part 2 details the specific actions undertaken by UNECE over the period to further this objective.

#### **Part I**

#### **2. Overall environment**

At present, the situation regarding the use of electronic standards differs considerably between different countries in transition and even within individual countries, region and/or specific ministry. Most of the countries in the region have e-government and related programmes which foresee the provision of various types of services by governmental bodies. At the same time, such activities are usually not sufficiently coordinated on a technical level, which leads to situations where ministries in the same country use different document formats and even software to submit data.

This highlights the importance of conducting awareness campaigns simultaneously for two distinct groups - policy makers and technical experts; and to have information packages specifically tailored to each specific group of users.

The need assessment studies on regulatory and procedural obstacles to trade in Belarus and Kazakhstan, undertaken by the UNECE secretariat in 2010-2012, have been used on a pilot basis to identify specific country needs in order to allow the development of tailored solutions.<sup>3</sup>

The secretariat, through its contacts with national agencies, technical cooperation projects and national and regional organizations, has compiled the following overview of the situation regarding the implementation of trade facilitation and eBusiness standards in transition economies.

In the transition economies, the ministries with the most advanced use of eBusiness technology seem to be those dealing with security, taxes, customs, statistics and passports.

Almost all ministries in the CIS countries have their own information systems and databases (with different levels of complexity and often based upon different standards). Most countries intend to develop inter-agency information systems. In principle, these agencies should then be able to communicate and exchange

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<sup>3</sup> The UNECE Committee on Trade is conducting a series of in-depth, demand-driven needs assessments on regulatory and procedural obstacles to trade. The two studies, undertaken by the UNECE secretariat in 2010-2012, were on Belarus and Kazakhstan an additional assessment will be conducted in Tajikistan in 2012 - 2013.

information with each other in electronic format. However, due to the still relatively limited application of e-information standards, and e-document standards that provide a functional electronic equivalent to paper documents, there may be difficulties in practice and interagency exchange of information may continue to be primarily paper based.

Many countries, particularly in Central Asia, are now prioritizing the development of Single Window (SW) systems for international trade<sup>4</sup> and have already started the process. The SW concept is fairly well known in the region but it appears that UN/CEFACT business standards such as the Core Components Library (CCL), UN/CEFACT Modelling Methodology (UMM) or Core Components Technical Specification (CCTS) may have so far failed to make a strong contribution to the development of standards-based electronic messages in the region.

In particular, in Central Asia, there is now a real risk that, due to different data standards, national Single Window frameworks will not be able to fully support cross-border electronic data exchange, which is crucial for transit operations in the region.

However, the recently published WCO Data Model version 3, which is based on UN/CEFACT standards, could lead to a customized regional data model being created for cross-border trade. This would require collaboration between the countries and policy leadership on the regional level; similar to the manner in which the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) ) countries use the ASEAN Data Model. Likewise, implementing standards-based automated customs management systems, such as UNCTAD's ASYCUDA<sup>5</sup>, would greatly enhance the adoption of eBusiness standards.

The secretariat also notes that the Cooperation Agreement between the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community and UNECE should facilitate the adoption of UN/CEFACT Standards in the region.

The agreement acknowledge the necessity of harmonization in the implementation by member States of internationally agreed norms, standards and legal instruments in the areas of trade facilitation, and states that Member States could request support from UNECE to review and advise on whether draft legislation developed under the aegis of EurAsEC IPA complies with relevant UNECE internationally agreed norms, standards, regulations and international legal instruments<sup>6</sup>.

In conclusion, UN/CEFACT eBusiness standards are not well known or implemented in e-government systems in transition economies. This is partially due to a lack of awareness of these standards, a lack of understanding and experience in the use of the standards, and because UN/CEFACT standards are perceived as highly specialized and sophisticated and requiring extensive expertise and investment for their implementation; factors that would not be attractive to countries with low trade volumes.

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<sup>4</sup> A Single Window is defined in UN/CEFACT Recommendation 33 (paragraph 2) as “a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once”. See [www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec\\_index.html](http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.html)

<sup>5</sup> ASYCUDA is a computerised customs management system which covers most foreign trade procedures, including manifests and customs declarations, accounting procedures and transit and suspense procedures.

<sup>6</sup> Cooperation Agreement between the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 25 January 2007 [www.unece.org/oes/MOU/EURASEC\\_agreement\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/oes/MOU/EURASEC_agreement_e.pdf)

The present situation shows the need to strengthen the holistic approach to capacity-building to support policy managers and high-level decision makers in addressing trade and transport facilitation using international standards and best practice. It also shows the need for practical technical standards and solutions that are accompanied by basic guides and tools.

### **3. Specific case: Countries of the Customs Union between the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus**

Countries in the Customs Union between the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus are more advanced than many of their neighbours in implementing electronic government (e-government) facilities.

**The Russian Federation** has extensive information systems in areas such as passport and visa controls. Information is exchanged electronically with a number of other agencies and ministries (foreign affairs, security). The information system of the Russian customs is used to provide customs statistics and to exchange information in the framework of a database (“agencies exchange”).

The Ministry of telecom and mass communications (MIAIS) is developing a national inter-agency automatic information system to support the regulation and control of external trade. The system is based on the concept of cooperation between federal agencies responsible for border controls, which was approved by the Government in May 2008.

**In Kazakhstan**, “electronic customs” is a component of an e-government information system and a number of pilot modules are already functioning. For example, a module was established to facilitate the electronic submission of customs declaration to any customs point through the Internet. This information feeds into a module on risk assessment of products crossing the border.

Pilot activities have been undertaken at the inter-agency centre for customs control, which unites the regulatory controls of border agencies. With assistance from the World Bank, technical and organizational feasibility work has also been carried out regarding the establishment of a Single Window.

**Belarus**, in cooperation with Russian customs, is establishing an automated customs management and information system. It will carry out the following tasks: control of customs transit; confirmation of exports; control of temporarily imported transport means; support and updating of legal and normative documentation etc. The Belarus tax ministry is working on a system for exchanging information among the Customs Union countries on payment of indirect taxes.

The Belarus health ministry is working on an information system to support a common list of products that are subject to sanitary and other related controls on the territory of the three Customs Union states.

The legal and organizational framework (including for information technology issues) for the Customs Union is not yet fully in place. For example, each individual member country has numerous agreements with individual third countries that regulate specific aspects of their trade relations. Russia has 102 such agreements; Kazakhstan has 50 and Belarus 40. This makes the harmonization and integration of processes very complicated.

The countries signed an agreement on applying information technologies in electronic document exchange for international and mutual trade on the united customs territory of the Customs Union. This agreement contains a definition of e-document, the principle of equivalency of e- and paper documents, certification of

digital signatures and other issues. The countries also agreed on the concept of an integrated information system, which will provide a technical means for exchanging information among regulatory agencies (the agreement does not mention international or UN/CEFACT standards). The UNECE secretariat's work with the Customs Union is described in more details, in Part 2 below.

## **4. Conclusions**

Given this situation, the UNECE secretariat identified the following needs:

- 1) Prioritize the development of standards for inter-agency information exchange and cross-border data exchange.
- 2) Focus particularly on the development of electronic documents to support regulatory processes in international trade (including certificates of origin, conformity assessment certificates, declarations of conformity of the manufacturer/supplier, sanitary/phytosanitary certificates and other licenses and permits).
- 3) Ensure that standards and approaches complement the implementation of the WCO Data Model in the region.
- 4) Develop standards with a view to ease of implementation, as well as low implementation and break-even costs.
- 5) Accompany standards relevant for developing countries and transition economies with basic user and implementation guides.
- 6) In cooperation with the other UN regional commissions and relevant UN agencies, support policy managers and high-level decision makers in developing solutions using trade facilitation, documents harmonization; data simplification and harmonization; business process analysis and solutions for Single Window systems based on standards provided by different national and international organizations.

## **Part II**

### **Action taken by the UNECE secretariat**

#### **1. Introduction**

To increase awareness of UN/CEFACT standards in transition economies and to encourage experts in these countries to participate in the standards-development work, the secretariat has undertaken the actions described below. The gap between transition and developed economies in awareness and use of such standards is vast.

Therefore, addressing this issue will thus take much time and effort. Indeed, a fundamental assessment is required with a view to embarking on a more radical programme of engagement and adoption of standards.

The secretariat has informed and will continue to inform the UN/CEFACT Bureau on a regular basis of these actions and outcomes, with a view to identifying areas where the Bureau can take appropriate action and the secretariat looks forward to further engagement of the Bureau and UN/CEFACT experts in this ongoing work.

## **2. Strategic Approach: Participation of the countries in transition**

The participation of countries with transition economies has been relatively limited in UN/CEFACT's work, and this has been the case for many years. In these countries, the use of standards is primarily driven by government prescription, through a law or regulations specifying the use of a particular standard. The private sector's role is limited to following these requirements and to implementing whatever set of standards is prescribed by government.

Experts from transition economies need to be assisted in their preparations for participation in such meetings, especially with more detailed and user friendly information on UN/CEFACT projects.

The secretariat's efforts to increase participation of countries with transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT demonstrated that such engagement needs an extensive preparatory work, on the one hand, to persuade countries in the usefulness of the work done, and, on the other, to allow interested experts to get acquainted in advance with specific projects.

For example, participation by the first technical experts from Russia and Belarus in the UN/CEFACT Forum in September 2011 revealed their difficulties in joining ongoing projects without prior assistance and showed the need for them to have in advance user-friendly information on the projects, their purpose, relevant issues and status. These concerns were passed to UN/CEFACT and were also transformed into specific activities by the secretariat for information support to countries interested in participating in UN/CEFACT.

To promote increased participation by these countries, the secretariat has taken steps to raise awareness of UN/CEFACT and related UNECE secretariat activities among all major stakeholders (policy makers and technical experts) as well as to promote specific technical projects and approaches, in particular, by engaging in discussions related to electronic business standards with the key standards-setting organizations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as national standards-setting agencies. Details of such activities are presented below.

## **3. Regional level –standards-setting organizations**

The key CIS organizations dealing with standards on a regional level are the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC) and the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification.

Both organizations include and represent sectoral ministries/agencies of the CIS countries. A brief overview of both of these organizations is provided below.

**Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC):** This is a coordinating body of the ministries of communications of 12 CIS states, with a secretariat in Moscow.

In 2009, the UNECE secretariat established contacts with the RCC secretariat and with its Working Group on Standards. It invited this Working Group to examine the UN/CEFACT standards and look into their possible use in the RCC countries.

The RCC Working Group on Standards considered this issue at its meeting in Baku in October 2009 and they expressed interest in studying the matter further, provided it received concise information in Russian on UN/CEFACT standards and tools and on their possible use. The chair of the RCC Working Group 1 participated in the 16<sup>th</sup>

Plenary of UN/CEFACT and attended the training programme for countries in transition organized on that occasion.

In 2011, the secretariat took part in the meeting of the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC), namely of the RCC Working Group on standardization and of its Commission on informatization. About 30 experts participated in these meetings and represented the ministries of communications from five CIS countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation).

Following the discussions and issues identified at these meetings, the UNECE secretariat prepared a proposal to the RCC to look into inter-agency information exchange issues, which seem to be an unresolved matter in many countries. This proposal was tabled to the meeting of the RCC Coordination Council on Informatization (2 June 2011, Yerevan) where it was agreed that this UNECE proposal would be followed up by the RCC Commission on Information Security and by the RCC Commission on Informatization.

In 2012, the secretariat continued working with the expert groups under the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC) with a view to promoting RCC activities at UN/CEFACT and UN/CEFACT tools at RCC. The Secretariat helped RCC experts to prepare an overview of a RCC project on transboundary trust space (i.e. on the validation of e-documents) which was presented at the UN/CEFACT February 2012 Plenary and at its April 2012 Forum.

The dialogue on this project between RCC and UN/CEFACT experts allowed Participants to identify areas of mutual interest which resulted in the RCC deciding to involve their experts in the work on the revision of UNECE recommendation number 14 (on authentication of trade documents by means other than signature). The secretariat believes that this approach (studying and trying to link areas of interest/concern of the transition economies to the activities of UN/CEFACT) could be the way forward for involving transition economies into the practical work at the UNECE.

**CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification:** This is one of the effective, functioning inter-regional CIS organizations/bodies; it unites standardization bodies from all 12 CIS member states. It is registered as a regional standardization organization at ISO under the name: Euro Asian Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification (EASC). During 2009, the secretariat held discussions with the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification on standards related to e-commerce and e-business

At its June 2009 meeting, the Inter-State Council agreed that e-commerce issues were of interest to its member governments and requested countries to submit specific proposals to initiate the work in this area.

In spring 2010, the secretariat submitted a more detailed proposal to the Inter-State Council to look into UN/CEFACT standards and their relevance to members of the Council. This and other proposals, including an invitation from the secretariat to the September 2010 UN/CEFACT Forum in Geneva and the parallel UN/CEFACT information seminar in Geneva, were considered at the 39th meeting of the Council which took place in June 2010 in Ukraine (11 CIS countries were represented).

The Council agreed that its countries had a common interest in information technologies related to identifying (and particularly to ensuring traceability) of products in trade, and decided to pursue work in this area. It proposed that the inter-state standardization technical committees TC 517 “technologies of automatic identification and of data collection and biometrics” would be assigned responsibility for matters related to identifying products in trade.

Subsequently, experts from Belarus and Russia representing TC 517 participated in the 2009 Geneva Forum and information sessions.

Following contacts with the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification and promotion of the UNECE activities and tools among its member states, in November 2011 the heads of the national standards bodies agreed to include some UNCEFACT standards in their current programme of work for the inter-state standards for 2012. The standards suggested for transposition and implementation in the CIS region include UN/EDIFACT (most widely used standard for electronic data interchange: also adopted as an ISO standard- ISO 9735) and also a standard for the uniform format and harmonization of paper documents - UN Layout Key (adopted as ISO standard ISO 6422).

The secretariat also continues its cooperation with national standards setting bodies in the area of information standards established earlier at the proposal and with the support from UNECE.

At the invitation of the CIS Bureau for standards, the secretariat participated in the annual meeting of the CIS Interstate Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification with a view to discussing possible cooperation between this organization and UN/CEFACT. The meeting took place in Turkmenbashi, in May 2011 and it was attended by more than 80 delegates representing national standards bodies from 10 CIS states (the only absent countries being Armenia and Georgia). Also present were the chairs of ISO and IEC, representatives from CEN and from European national standards bodies.

A detailed dialogue took place on current UN/CEFACT and UNECE secretariat activities and projects, on forthcoming deliverables (and meetings) and their potential interest to CIS countries, and on efforts to involve countries in transition in this work. The meeting recommended that Inter-state technical committee 22 (information technologies) explore the possibility of preparing a proposal on a standardization programme based on the UN/CEFACT deliverables.

### **3.1 Other activities on standards-setting matters**

In addition to specialized standards-setting organizations, the secretariat is working also with regional and sub-regional organizations of parliamentarians. Thus, as part of its work in promoting UNECE (UN/CEFACT) legal instruments and approaches, the UNECE secretariat is closely cooperating with the EurAsEC Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (IPA) which is preparing model laws for various sectors in its member states. In 2011, the UNECE secretariat prepared comments and proposals for the road-map for single window elaborated by the EurAsEC IPA.

In 2011, contacts were established with the economic block of the CIS regional organization of parliamentarians (CIS Inter- Parliament Assembly) and in October 2011, the secretariat took part in the meeting of the CIS IPA Permanent Commission on Economy and Finance and presented UN/CEFACT and UNECE activities in trade, transport and other areas. Members of this body expressed their interest into cooperating with UNECE/CEFACT in identified areas.

In 2012, the secretariat continued consultations with the economic block of the CIS regional organization of parliamentarians (CIS Inter- Parliament Assembly) and discussions are under way to organize a meeting in 2013 for parliamentarians on trade facilitation and e-business issues.

### **3.2 Support to the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan (specific activities relating to standards)**

In November 2009, the Heads of State of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan decided to create a Customs Union as of 1 January 2010. The Union de facto started functioning with the entry into force of its common Customs Code on 1 July 2010.

This meant introducing a common customs classification system for goods, a common customs code, common rules of origin and other certificates, as well as drawing up common laws, regulations and procedures, or harmonizing existing ones.

The secretariat established contacts with the executive body of the Customs Union - Customs Commission and offered expertise and assistance to interested countries and the CU from UNECE experts.

Following these contacts, the secretariat of the Commission of the Customs Union asked UNECE and UN/CEFACT experts to comment on a number of the Customs Union documents / agreements prepared (agreement on the use of information technologies, on the Customs code; on integrated information systems; on uniform conformity certificates, etc.).

Since 2010, the UNECE secretariat has been working with the executive body of the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Commission (established in autumn 2011; previously called Customs Commission), on the elaboration of technical feasibility requirements for the Integrated Information System for internal and external trade in the Customs Union. The final version of these requirements approved in the summer of 2011 contains special reference to the use of single window mechanisms (including UN/CEFACT recommendations 33 and 35) and stresses the importance of the use of International standards and of compatibility with other systems (the first version did not have such provisions).

The UNECE secretariat translated the draft agreement on applying information technologies under electronic document exchange in international and mutual trade on the united customs territory of Customs Union. Experts from the UN/CEFACT Legal Group and UN/CITRAL made comments on this draft, some of which were reflected in the final text adopted in September 2010 (for example, while the draft made reference to specific technologies to be used for verification and authentication purposes, the final version is technology/standards neutral).

After comparing the Union's Customs code and the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), the UNECE secretariat suggested that it would be desirable to harmonize it with the RKC. It also suggested to take note of the trade facilitation discussions at WTO during further work on the code. (Some areas were singled out: for example, it was noted that the concessions to authorized business operators, which are being discussed at WTO, are much wider than those originally foreseen in the Customs Union code).

The UNECE secretariat also looked at the concept of an Integrated Information System for internal and external trade in the Customs Union. Major comments on the concept concerned the use of Single Window approaches (which were not mentioned), the use of international standards and the issue of compatibility with other systems. At the invitation of the Customs Commission, the secretariat took part in an expert meeting on the elaboration of regulatory and e-related Customs Union documents and agreements (St. Petersburg, November 2010).

The UNECE secretariat through its contacts with the CU Coordinating Council on information technologies contributed to the elaboration of technical feasibility

requirements for the Integrated Information System for internal and external trade in the Customs Union. The final version of these requirements stresses the use of single window mechanisms (with reference to UN/CEFACT recommendations 33 and 35), the importance of international standards and of compatibility with other systems. Following extensive consultations during 2012, the Eurasian Economic Commission submitted to UNECE in October 2012 a list of specific areas and technical proposals for cooperation and assistance which is currently under consideration by UN/CEFACT Bureau.

### **3.3 Discussions at the national level: standards-setting in the Russian Federation**

The UNECE secretariat also has been working extensively with national standards-setting agencies in the CIS and in the Russia Federation.

In the Russian Federation, it initiated consultations with different government agencies and with business to attract attention to UN/CEFACT tools and activities. These discussions were intended to encourage the creation of mirror committees to the UN/CEFACT working groups, and the establishment of groups of interested parties or national committees dealing with information standards.

In December 2009, a new technical committee “TC 22 Information Technologies” was established under the aegis of ROSSTANDARD (the Russian Federal Agency on Technical Regulating and Metrology) It is foreseen that this Committee will form the nucleus for an inter-State body on information technologies to be set up within the CIS framework. As a result of discussions with the TC 22 management, this technical committee decided in June 2010 to also take on the functions of a UN/CEFACT “mirror committee”.

These functions were assigned to its sub-group “Information technologies in state administration”. This decision (on a mirror committee function) was supported/approved by the Russian standards-setting agency (ROSSTANDARD) which is supervising the majority of Russian technical committees. The TC 22 Chair took part in the December 2010 round table in Geneva. The secretariat has been holding consultations with this TC on specific actions to promote UN/CEFACT deliverables through this TC.

The UNECE secretariat hopes that this arrangement will help to establish the first focal point on UN/CEFACT tools in the Russian Federation and, later on, in the CIS region.

In 2010, another TC on e-standards was established in Russia. It is TC 55 “Terminology, data elements and documentation in business process and electronic trade”. Its representatives took part in the December 2010 round table and in February 2011, this TC sent a request to UN/CEFACT asking for an advice on which UN/CEFACT tools and standards should be included in the national standardization programme. As the result of consultations with the secretariat, the current programme of TC 55 foresees transposition and adoption as national standards of two UNECE-UN/CEFACT standards: UN Layout Key (ISO 6422) and EDIFACT (ISO 9735) and of a number ISO standards on e-terminology.

In autumn 2009, contacts were established with Intra-Sectoral Council on Information Technologies functioning under the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP),

RSPP is interested in discussing the business-related aspects of UNECE standards and regulations (including in the e-business and e-trade sectors). It contributed to

hosting a first conference on information technologies and standards in October 2010 in Moscow.

## **4. Meetings**

The secretariat took part in the conference “development of small and medium business under Customs Union conditions” (Moscow, 12 April 2010). It provided information on the use of information technologies in developed countries and pointed out the importance of wider involvement of all stakeholders (both from ministries and from the private sector) in the debate on developments in the Customs Union and in discussions on relevant legal and administrative documents.

During events organized during the “Russian business week” (12-16 April 2010, Moscow) that were related to the Customs Union, the secretariat pointed to issues relating to the use of UN/CEFACT standards in the harmonization of documents (common certificates of conformity, etc.) and to the exchange of information among regulatory agencies in the Customs Union.

### **4.1 Parallel information events for transition economies at the UN/CEFACT Geneva Forum**

Following contacts with the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification, technical experts from Belarus and the Russian Federation representing the CIS inter-State standardization committee 517 (technologies of automatic identification and of data collection and biometrics) and experts from the Russian standardization agency (ROSSTANDART) took part in the UN/CEFACT Geneva Forum in September 2010.

During the Forum two seminars on UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations were organized; one was aimed at diplomats from the Geneva missions; another focused on technical experts. The attendance was more than 40 delegates from 27 countries (including 20 developing and transition economies) and more than 20 experts from 10 countries (including 7 developing and transition economies). Participants considered these events useful and during the discussions at the roundtable, participants requested UN/CEFACT to assist them in preparing the outline for a regional standardization programme. The secretariat will organize a similar event during the UN/CEFACT Plenary in June 2013.

On 1 October 2012, the secretariat organized two events for technical experts from the CIS region a training seminar on UN/CEFACT tools and standards and a round table on information e-exchange in which about 20 technical experts from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia took part. One of the recommendations taken by the experts after these meetings was to appoint national heads of delegations to UN/CEFACT as a means to initiate cooperation with this UNECE programme of work.

The secretariat also regularly organizes information updates for diplomats from the Geneva missions and for experts participating at UNECE events (for example, in the context of the Committee on Trade), as well as special awareness information sessions on UN/CEFACT tools and UNECE activities. Such sessions were held in Geneva in April 2012 for a group of Russian businessmen and in November 2012 for a group of Russian students.

There is growing interest in the transition economies (in particular those which are WTO members) in the on-going discussions at WTO on a potential new trade facilitation agreement. The accession of Russia to WTO in 2012 raised an interest

in this country in the WTO related issues. In October 2012 secretariat presented discussions at WTO on TF matters at the conference (held in Moscow) “WTO and Russia. Forecasts, risks and practical recommendations for business”. As a result of this event, consultations began between the secretariat and the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry on establishing a trade facilitation consultations mechanism (along the lines of the UN/CEFACT Recommendation 4).

## **4.2 Preparation of training materials**

In the framework of UNECE-OSCE cooperation, in 2010- 2012 the secretariat prepared a training module on trade facilitation and e-business for the OSCE Border Management College in Dushanbe and used it to deliver training to participants. Three courses were delivered in 2012 and the programme will continue in 2013.

As a part of its awareness activities in 2011-2012 the secretariat established contacts with a number of educational institutions in Europe and in the CIS region which expressed their interest in including standards-related issues (including trade facilitation, e-commerce and e-business) into their educational programmes (and in training of customs officers and related professions). For example, in autumn 2011, in one of the Moscow universities, a chair on information technologies was established.

As a practical follow-up to such interest, in cooperation with the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP6) a model educational programme on standardization was prepared. The UNECE activities in this area were presented and well received at a number of important fora, including at the ICES (International Cooperation for Education about Standardization) conference in Indonesia in May 2012 and at the first European conference on education about standardization in Brussels in June 2012.

Such model programmes, as well as a recommendation to governments to include standardization in the curricula of educational institutions were discussed and supported by all stakeholders participating at the special workshop organized in conjunction with the annual WP6 session in November 2012. There are already some positive developments in this area.

In September 2012, the Russian Government approved the concept of the development of the national system of standardization for the period up to 2020 which stresses “the necessity of updating or introducing in educational institutions of secondary and high levels of engineering and economic profiles of a standardization subject in accordance with the relevant educational directions”.

Discussions are currently underway on organization in 2013 in the CIS region of awareness workshops on TFIG (trade facilitation implementation guide) as an educational tool in this area. The secretariat was also invited to contribute to a major international conference on education in customs area which is planned to be held in Russia in autumn 2013.

## **4.3 Information support for countries in transition**

As a part of information support to the countries in transition, the secretariat continued working on the preparation of descriptive and information materials for experts in collaboration on this material with UN/CEFACT Bureau.

As a part of this process, the UNECE Single Window repository, which contains experiences on single window implementation, was further expanded with a new study on legal aspects of implementing single window in Finland. The repository

currently contains 19 studies; two of the recent studies (on Korea and Singapore) were translated in 2012 into Russian.

The secretariat also continues working on promoting public-private dialogue on trade facilitation matters and, in this context, the list of trade facilitation bodies available at the UNECE website was updated in 2012 (this list currently contains contact information on more than 30 bodies from UNECE and other regions).

The repository of the experiences of inter-agency trade facilitation coordination groups was expanded with studies on Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. These studies (as well as information on the Moldovan trade facilitation committee) were translated also into English and placed on the UNECE website. In autumn 2012 the secretariat agreed to collaborate with UNCTAD on preparation of a compendium of experiences of inter-agency trade facilitation groups.

In 2012, the secretariat prepared (at the request of the Russian business associations) in cooperation with the UNECE international and national experts a compendium of the best customs practices which will be used for the preparation of a road map on the improving of customs administration in Russia.

## **4.4 UNECE Secretariat Conferences**

In 2011, the secretariat organized and supported national events devoted to e-documents and data exchange issues.

The secretariat took part in the conference “development of small and medium business under Customs Union conditions” (Moscow, 12 April 2010). It provided information on the use of information technologies in developed countries and pointed out the importance of wider involvement of all stakeholders (both from ministries and from the private sector) in the debate on developments in the Customs Union and in discussions on relevant legal and administrative documents.

The secretariat regularly participates in the “Russian business weeks”. During the “Russian business week” in April 2010, February 2012 and in April 2012 in Moscow, the secretariat pointed to issues relating to the use of UN/CEFACT standards in the harmonization of documents (common certificates of conformity, etc.) and to the exchange of information among regulatory agencies in the Customs Union.

The secretariat contributed to the organization of an international conference “ID-Competence 2011” which was held in Minsk in April 2011. The conference was devoted to issues related to information technologies, international competitiveness and the use of information technologies in governance and in business primarily in Belarus. It was attended by about 70 participants from Belarusian ministries, agencies, companies, educational institutions as well as by international and national experts (including from Russia and Ukraine).

Since 2010, the secretariat has been organizing in Moscow, in cooperation with TC 22, conferences on information standards - the latest meeting (INFOSTANDART 2012) held in October 2012. The conference became an annual event where not only Russian issues but also experiences and problems of government and business in the Customs Union (including national matters of Belarus and Kazakhstan) as well as relevant UN/CEFACT tools and approaches are presented and discussed.

The participants (every year around 150-180) noted that this event became a platform for a dialogue on e-related matters between interested stakeholders in Russia and in Customs Union countries and it was decided to hold it annually.

The secretariat contributed to the organization of an international conference on customs issues which was held by the Association of European Businesses in Russia (AEB) in February 2012. Discussions, with more than 160 participants, showed that the business is facing serious TF problems in dealing with the customs and their alleged reluctance to dialogue with the companies. The AEB expressed its interest to work with UNECE on a repository of TF obstacles and on promoting best TF practices.

The complexity of standards and regulatory practices (including on information exchange) for business, was also discussed at the EU-Russia regulatory conference in Kazan in October 2012. At the request of the business associations from countries of the Customs Union (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan), the secretariat is currently exploring a feasibility of organizing an international conference on standards related matters and good practices in Geneva in autumn 2013.

In May 2012, the secretariat participated in the workshop on supply chains connectivity (side event to the meeting of the APEC Electronic Commerce Steering Group in Kazan, Russia) and presented the UNECE project/activities on supply chains.

## **4.5 UNECE secretariat cooperation with UN Regional Commissions**

In 2011, at the initiative of the UNECE secretariat, consultations were held between the five UN Regional Commissions (RCs) on wider cooperation and coordination in the trade facilitation area. As the result of these consultations, the RCs agreed on the importance and the desirability of having a common joint approach to trade facilitation issues and on elaborating common capacity building and training tools.

This decision was confirmed at a meeting of the executive secretaries of RCs in January 2010. To implement this decision it was agreed to establish an intra-secretariat group with a revolving chair (for 2011-2012 it was entrusted to UNECE secretariat).

As a practical follow-up, the UNECE secretariat (with input from all RCs) prepared a proposal for a joint RCs project on strengthening the capacity of developing and transition economies to link to global supply chains through the reduction of trade obstacles. This project was approved (under the UN development account) in autumn 2011. The first national delegates from five regions to be sponsored under this project have participated in the Global Trade Facilitation Conference organized by the UNECE secretariat in December 2011 in Geneva see [www.unece.org/swglobalconference2011](http://www.unece.org/swglobalconference2011).

Members of the UN/CEFACT Bureau also participated in the conference. During this conference, the supply chains project was formally launched. Under this project in 2012 a background study on information requirements for supply chains was elaborated and regional studies and regional workshops are currently under preparation.

UNECE, together with UNESCAP, also works within the system of United Nations Regional Commissions to strengthen interregional collaboration of Single Windows to enable a smooth, electronic flow of trade information that mirrors the flow of goods along the international supply chain. Given the success of this collaboration, UNECE is now leading a joint UN RCs initiative on trade facilitation, which will include components of UNNEXT in a wider United Nations RCs approach.

## **5. UNECE intra-secretariat cooperation on raising awareness of UN/CEFACT tools**

### **5.1 Single Window**

In the context of intra-secretariat cooperation (within UNECE) on information technologies issues, the secretariat suggested to add single window issues to the programme of an international seminar held in Minsk, Belarus in June 2010. As the result, a presentation was made on raising the efficiency of public administrations using Single Windows and information technologies. The seminar “Real property cadastre and registration services in the ECE region: the impact of “E-government” reforms” was organized by the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration and the Belarus State Committee on Property and the Belarus National Cadastral Agency.

### **5.2 Harmonization of trade regulatory documents**

In cooperation with experts from the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6), the secretariat prepared examples of good regulatory practices in conformity assessment. These were sent to the Customs Union experts working on preparing common conformity certificates and manufacturers declarations to be used in the Customs Union.

### **5.3 e-traceability**

In October 2010, the secretariat made a presentation on the use of international electronic business standards in e-traceability to the meeting of the Specialized Section on standardization of Meat of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7). This presentation referenced the Belarus project on “e-passport of goods” presented at the 2009 UN/CEFACT Plenary. The Specialized Section stressed the importance of these matters for both the meat industry and regulators and expressed its interest to collaborate on these issues.

The traceability issues in the market surveillance context were also discussed at the session of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6; November 2010; Geneva). The Working Party decided to consider a possibility of elaborating a recommendation on traceability matters.

Following preliminary contacts and consultations in the secretariat on e-traceability issues between experts in UN/CEFACT, the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7), WP.6 organized a workshop on traceability issues (regulatory and technical) during its annual session in October 2011 in Geneva to which UN/CEFACT experts participated.

The debate on traceability was continued at the plenary session of the UNECE Committee on Trade (CT) in June 2012 with presentations from UN/CEFACT experts. Participants agreed on the importance of traceability and on the necessity of working on it as a cross-sectoral issue.

## **6. Conclusions**

The preliminary conclusions arising from the secretariat's work in the field is that the application of information standards and policies is often fragmented, being primarily limited to specific sectors. This may be due to insufficient understanding by policy makers of the global need for a common regulatory information language.

Accordingly, the secretariat recommends the elaboration of an approach and conceptual design for the exchange of information and data (including through electronic means) between regulatory agencies and within e-government programmes. Such an approach could cover both policy and practical issues and address the possibilities and needs for data exchange at both national and transboundary levels. It should promote good approaches, practices and procedures for the exchange of information (including through the use of UN/CEFACT tools) and encourage developing countries and countries in transition to enter into both internal and international dialogues on their needs and concerns in this area.

## **Annex B**

### **Capacity-building activities in support of EXCOM decisions**

#### **1. Strategic approach to capacity-building**

EXCOM recommended the development of an integrated strategic capacity-building plan on the use and implementation of UN/CEFACT instruments and the development of supporting actions - with particular attention to the needs of transition economies.

In response to the above, an action plan was prepared and agreed by UN/CEFACT Plenary in 2009 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2009/5).

EXCOM's recommendation E(i) expected the secretariat to take the lead in implementing the capacity-building plan and undertaking relevant capacity-building activities. To fulfil this task, the secretariat developed a programme of action, to enable the implementation of the action plan, based on the following steps:

- understand the trade facilitation dynamics and needs of member States (MS);
- building awareness of available international standards and recommendations – in particular those of UN/CEFACT;
- assist member States to build capacity develop and implement initiatives to address their needs;
- develop tools and guides to help implement them;
- providing technical training.

In building capacity, UNECE also worked closely with the other UN regional commissions and the international organizations such as the World Bank, the World Customs Organization, the World Trade Organization, UNCTAD and others. The secretariat worked closely with UNESCAP, especially in developing and implementing trade facilitation initiatives and tools to address the needs of their common member States in Central Asia.

At the request of UN member States, this cooperation model is being broadened to include all the regional commission through the joint UN regional commission initiative on trade facilitation (see Section XXX for details).

An overview of these activities over the period February 2009-October 2012 is presented below.

#### **2. Needs identification**

The Trade Facilitation needs of member States have been identified through:

- Requests of assistance in specific areas, made by member States directly to the UNECE secretariat;
- Requests presented by member States at the UN/CEFACT Plenary and Forums.
- Surveys carried out in member States;

- Trade needs assessment studies;
- Outreach and awareness rising missions to member States, workshops and seminars.

## **2.1 Requests presented by member and surveys**

Upon request made by delegations attending the 15<sup>th</sup> UN/CEFACT Plenary, UNECE has prepared a document to provide a mapping of requests formulated during the 2008 and 2009 Plenaries and coming from the 2008 survey of member States. This document was presented to the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenary in 2010 (Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/7). This assessment of needs has been reflected into the UN/CEFACT 2010-2011 programme of work. (See document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/7 for details).

## **2.2 Trade needs-assessment studies**

UNECE, through the Committee on Trade, is carrying out trade needs-assessment studies in countries with economies in transition to support their greater integration with regional and international value chains. The studies use in-house evaluation methodology, geared to ascertain behind and at-the-border procedural and regulatory barriers to trade.

They are implemented in close consultation with government and private sector stakeholders, drawing on the experience of the Committees' subsidiary bodies. To date, the UNECE has carried out two trade needs assessment studies on Belarus (2010) and on Kazakhstan (2011), and is in the process of carrying out a third study on Tajikistan.

The studies identify strengths and weaknesses, gaps and redundancies in the individual countries' regulatory and procedural framework, and feature detailed recommendations that:

- (i) could be turned into action plans, with an eye to fostering joint action with neighbouring countries;
- (ii) provide the basis for policy discussions within the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, including UN/CEFACT, on where additional work is required;
- (iii) inform donors as to where assistance might be required.

The outcome of the above work will enable the secretariat to develop a capacity-building approach to encourage the participation of transition economies in the work of UN/CEFACT and to promote the application of current trade facilitation techniques and standards.

As part of its activities on needs assessments in countries in transition, the secretariat arranged an information note on the use of information technologies in Kazakh customs, which was submitted to the 2009 UN/CEFACT Plenary (document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2009/14).

The secretariat has completed, jointly with ESCAP, training modules for delegates and technical experts on single window, documents harmonization, e-documents infrastructure and business process analysis to be used by the UN secretariat in its capacity building activities. It is foreseen, that such modules can also be used by educational institutions in the region. The first version of these modules has been

used to deliver in December 2010 a training session at the OSCE Border Management Staff College (Dushanbe, Tajikistan).

### 3. Outreach, awareness-rising and capacity-building

UNECE Trade Facilitation capacity-building and outreach activities are undertaken through UN Development Account projects under the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. UNECE does not have a regular budget to undertake such activities. This work focuses mainly on activities related to trade facilitation assessment and planning, Single Window Implementation, Business Process Analysis, document simplification and harmonization, and Data Harmonization. Of particular importance is the on-going work carried out with Central Asian countries on Single Window Implementation.

An overview of these activities over the period February 2009 – November 2012 is summarised in Table 1 below. A more detailed description is provided in the following sections.

Very relevant is also the work done by the UNECE Regional Advisor for Trade Facilitation. He carries out a programme of work to provide strategic policy advice, and manage capacity-building and technical cooperation projects funded under the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation. (A summary of the Regional Advisor's activities is provided in annex C)

**Table 1**

#### **Outreach and Capacity-Building Events Organized by UNECE Secretariat 2009-2012**

Date	Participants/ Beneficiary countries	Location	Meeting title	Short description and URL
Nov. 2009	Developing countries and transition economies in Asia	Bangkok, Thailand	ESCAP ADB Trade Facilitation Forum	Forum on Trade Facilitation Implementation and establishment of a country steering Group for UNNEXT
Dec. 2009	OSCE member countries with special focus on Mediterranean and Black Sea countries	Valetta, Malta	OSCE Workshop on Integrated Approach to Supply Chain Security for the Mediteranean Region, hosted by Greece and Azerbaijan	Using trade and eBusiness standards to increase international security
January 2010	EU member countries	Amsterdam, Netherlands	Workshop for High level management instruments for Single Window	Research on a framework for Single Window Planning and Implementation
April 2010	Developing countries in the East African Union	Mombasa, Kenya	Integrated Border Management in the East African Community, organised by the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA)	Use of UNECE standards and tools to support the establishment of a Customs Union
July 2010	Central Asian countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan,	Baku, Azerbaijan	UNNEXT Capacity Building Workshop on	Regional workshop on techniques to analyse and

Date	Participants/ Beneficiary countries	Location	Meeting title	Short description and URL
	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Peoples Republic of China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) and administrations and private sector companies in Azerbaijan		Single Window and Business Process Analysis, supported by ADB and GTZ	simplify business processes <a href="http://www.customs.gov.az/en/news-106.html">www.customs.gov.az/en/news-106.html</a>
July 2010	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Peoples Republic of China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, ADB, ESCAP, ECE, WCO, Thailand, Singapore	Baku, Azerbaijan	Single Window Implementation Seminar (CAREC with support of UNECE and UNESCAP through UNNEXT)	Regional aspects of Single Window development in Central Asia
Oct. 2010	Mongolia; review supported through Government officials from several UNNEXT member countries	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	UNNEXT review meeting on the Mongolia High Level master Plan for its Single Window implementation	Meeting of high level experts to discuss with decision makers from the Mongolian Government their strategy for Single Window Implementation
Oct. 2010	300 participants from Asia and Pacific Region. All Central Asian Countries were represented in the meeting	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Asia Trade Facilitation Forum (UNESCAP/UNECE/ADB)	Knowledge sharing on Trade Facilitation implementation among countries in the greater Asia and Pacific Region
Oct. 2010	Developing and transition countries of Asia including Central Asia. Central Asia is represented by two members in the Advisory Board (Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan)	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	First meeting of the UNNEXT Advisory Board	Provide advice on the deliverables and priorities of the UNNEXT deliverables
Oct. 2010	Selected government officials from developing countries and transition economies	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	UNNEXT Workshop on WCO Data Model 3.0 and Data Harmonization for Paperless Trade	Technical Workshop on simplification of trade documents and development of electronic documents using international standards
Apr. 2011	South East Asian countries, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan	Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Training Workshop on Business Process Analysis for Paperless Trade and Single Window Implementation,	Regional UNNEXT workshop on Business Process Analysis with support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Jun. 2011	Kazakhstan	Astana Kazakhstan	UNNEXT Training on Business Process Analysis for Paperless Trade and Single Window System for Kazakhstan/Central Asia	UNNEXT training on Business Process Analysis in collaboration with Kazakhstan Customs and GIZ
Oct. 2011	CAREC member countries in Central Asia	Seoul, Republic of Korea	UNNEXT Capacity Building Workshop on Addressing Legal Issues for Single Window Implementation and Paperless Trade	Technical Workshop on gap analysis and setting up legal frameworks for Single Window and cross border trade with support of ADB (CAREC)
Oct. 2011	South East Asian countries, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan,	Seoul, Republic of	UNNEXT Capacity Building Workshop on Data	Technical Workshop on simplification of trade

Date	Participants/ Beneficiary countries	Location	Meeting title	Short description and URL
	Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Afghanistan	Korea	Harmonization for Single Window Environment,	documents and development of electronic documents using international standards; the workshop is based on new course material jointly developed by UNECE, UNESCAP and WCO under UNNEXT with support of ADB (CAREC)
Oct. 2011	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Afghanistan	Seoul, Republic of Korea	Regional breakout meeting of Central Asian Countries Asia-Pacific on the Trade Facilitation Forum 2011, 4- 5 October 2011,	Organization of a breakout meeting of central Asian countries on regional gap analysis and performance indicators for trade facilitation implementation in Central Asia
Dec. 2011	UN Member countries, including Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Afghanistan	Geneva, Switzerland	Single Window Project Planning and Implementation	UNNEXT high level workshop on planning and managing Single Window projects
Dec. 2011	UN Member countries, including, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Afghanistan		UN Global Trade Facilitation Conference on Supply Chains and Single Windows in the next decade	Global conference organized by the five UN Regional Commissions
July 2012	Greece	Athens, Greece	National High Level Workshop for an integrated Export Facilitation Strategy In	Joint workshop of the Government of Greece, EU and UNECE
June 2012	East European and Central Asian Countries	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	UNNExT Capacity building Workshop for OSCE	Capacity building for CIS and EU member states in Tajikistan under an agreement with OSCE
June 2012	Tajikistan	Tajikistan	Workshop on planning and managing national Data Harmonization in Support of the Tajikistan Single Window Dushanbe,	Dialogue on a data harmonization strategy for Tajikistan Single Window
Oct. 2012	Greece	Athens, Greece	Government and private sector stakeholder workshop to facilitate export of Greek Agriculture produce	Planning workshop for Greek BPA projects

### 3.1 Capacity-building for Single Window Implementation

Capacity building for Single Window Implementation was a primary focus over the period. Initially developed by UN/CEFACT as a recommendation to governments to establish “a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge

standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements”<sup>7</sup>, governments have taken the Single Window concept to a much broader and comprehensive dimension.

It now commonly includes the simplification and harmonization of trade procedures and documents and information flows, and the interagency exchanges of such information to simplify and automate cross-border trade. It usually focuses on the national level and in some cases on the regional level.

These factors reflect the point that implementation of core elements of trade facilitation are preconditions for the successful operation of a Single Window. Single Windows have become a catalyst for the introduction of such measures and, as such, the concept is a powerful force in enhancing trade facilitation implementation and development in transition and developing economies. This is in part because the concept of a Single Window is relatively simple to comprehend and is politically attractive.

It is a testimony to the strength of UNECE Recommendation 33 and the capacity-building work of the secretariat that the number of Single Windows worldwide has greatly increased over the last years, reaching 71 in 2012 (up from 49 in 2011)<sup>8</sup> and is expected to reach 100 in the coming five years<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.2 Single Window Development in Central Asia and the United Nations Network of Experts**

Governments in many developing and transition economies in Central Asia consider Single Window as a priority strategic instrument to foster public-private sector collaboration in external trade and to integrate their national economy into regional and global markets.

They are increasingly recognising the potential of Single Windows to reduce the extensive waiting times encountered in their cross border trade and use Single Windows as instruments for regional trade integration.

These developments have significantly increased the need for regional and interregional collaboration in the design, implementation and extension of Single Windows. Such activities can include common managerial models for Single Window project management, the exchange of experience and lessons learned from coordination in the development of regional strategies and synergies in Single Window implementations.

In order to support these developments, UNECE and UNESCAP have developed the UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia Pacific (UNNExT), that is a joint initiative of UNECE and UNESCAP, established at the request of member States and funded through the UN Development account 6<sup>th</sup> Tranche. UNNExT provide a platform for policy dialogue, exchange of experience and capacity building required by the member States of the region.

In using this common platform, the two organizations are able to coordinate their delivery of services for their joint constituency in Central Asia, to leverage considerable synergies in developing capacity-building programmes and to engage donor agencies in the joint work. The Network also provides a platform for policy makers and experts from the region to exchange experience and to provide peer-to-

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<sup>7</sup> UN/CEFACT Recommendation 33 [www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec33/rec33\\_trd352e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec33/rec33_trd352e.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, Doing Business Report 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Ten years of Single Window implementation: lessons learned for the future, CrimsonLogic, UN Regional Commissions Global Trade Facilitation Conference.

peer support in addressing the specific challenges of transition economies and developing countries.

In the UNECE region, the following countries participate in the network: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. In addition, Afghanistan participates as a SPECA country and Mongolia, which is part of UNESCAP and shares many characteristics with Central Asian countries.

Regional organizations and technical cooperation agencies, in particular ASEAN, ADB, USAID, GIZ and the World Bank, collaborate with and support UNECE and UNESCAP in the planning and organization of workshops and training events, using synergies and complementing competences and resources. Technical assistance agencies frequently request assistance of the network of experts to contribute its competence in trade facilitation instruments and implementation to the delivery of their projects in the countries of the region.

The evaluation of UNNEXT, carried out in 2012 by participating member countries, is published on the UN website<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4. UNNEXT Guides and training materials

Over the course of the last two years, UNECE and UNESCAP developed a range of tools and training packages to assist in the delivery of its capacity building activities. The training follows a modular, step-by-step approach to the simplification and automation of trade processes and data interchange – particularly for application in the implementation of Single Window. This fosters a balanced focus on trade facilitation and eBusiness tasks. The packages include:

**Guide for Business Process Analysis<sup>11</sup>:** The guide is used by national experts and government agencies in developing countries and transition economies to analyse and trade procedures and regulatory requirements and to automate procedures, often in the context of Single Window implementation. The Guide has already been used in national training events in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Iran and in regional training events for Central Asian Countries organised in Baku, Azerbaijan.

UNECE is currently using the BPA Guide in response to a request from the Greek Government to help streamline trade process in a number of key sectors. This project is regarded by the European Commission and the Greek Government as a key deliverable for their national export strategy.

**Guide for the simplification and harmonization of trade documents:** The Guide promotes the simplification and standardization of trade documents on the basis of important trade facilitation standards and recommendations of UN/CEFACT, in particular the UN Layout Key Recommendation and UN/CEFACT recommendations on the use of codes in trade documents. Training on simplification of trade documents is also integrated in workshops on data simplification and harmonization.

**Single Window Implementation Framework (SWIF):** Developed by UNECE<sup>12</sup>, this framework is based on latest management instruments for the development of large inter-organizational systems such as The Open Group Architecture

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<sup>10</sup> See : [iseek.un.org/LibraryDocuments/1028-201207240403481462858.pdf](http://iseek.un.org/LibraryDocuments/1028-201207240403481462858.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See : [www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2558.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2558.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Joint research project of the Vrije University of Amsterdam, Delft University of Technology, Kasetsart University Thailand, TNO and UNECE under the EU funded ITAIDE project:  
[www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/SingleWindowImplementationFramework.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/SingleWindowImplementationFramework.pdf)

Framework (TOGAF) and the Programme Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). The Implementation Framework adapts these standards to the specific case of Single Window projects. It provides Governments with an integrated approach to preparing and implementing a Single Window project.

**Guide for Single Window Planning and Implementation<sup>13</sup>:** Supports policy makers and managers in the planning and implementation of Single Windows. The Guide promotes the use of open, international standards, in particular from UN/CEFACT and is based on international standards for best managerial practice. The Guide has been developed jointly with experienced Single Window project managers and academia and includes country case studies. It takes into account the specific policy and implementation situation in developing countries and transition economies.

The Guide emphasises a stepwise approach, including consensus building, defining clear objectives and steps for the Single Window, defining Key Performance Indicators and transparent project planning. The Guide has been used in national, regional and global workshops and in the development of a Single Window Master Plans and projects in Tajikistan, Mongolia and recently for the development of a national Trade Facilitation Strategy in Greece.

**Capacity-Building Guide Single Window Legal Issues<sup>14</sup>:** This Guide covers the wide-ranging legal issues that are related to the development and operation of a Single Window and, to a certain degree, some of the important electronic commerce legal concepts and approaches applicable to the single window environment. It is intended to give policymakers a broad understanding of the key considerations that should be addressed in effectively establishing the legal infrastructure for a SW.

The Guide is not specifically aimed for lawyers but rather to those who are expected to drive the successful development of single window and paperless trade initiatives in their countries. This Guide complements UN/CEFACT Recommendation 35.

**Guide for Data harmonization and Modelling for Single Window Environment<sup>15</sup>:** To support Governments in simplifying trade documents and implement paperless trade, UNECE, UNESCAP and the World Customs Organization developed a high level Guide and workshop material for data harmonization. The Guide is built on the concept of simplification of trade documents through document alignment to the UN Layout Key (UNECE Recommendation 1), use of common definitions for trade data (UNTDDED) and the use of standards based electronic messages which align with WCO and UN/CEFACT instruments. The Guide complements UN/CEFACT Recommendation 34 on data simplification and standardization.

## 5. Other capacity-building events and activities

In December 2011 the five UN regional commissions under the leadership of UNECE organised the Global Trade Facilitation Conference on Single Window and Supply Chains in the next Decade. The conference was attended by over 200 experts and policy makers from around the world. The objective of the conference was to gain experience and lessons learned from ten years of Single Window implementation around the world for better planning and improved investment in future development of Single Window, Customs and Port Community Systems.

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<sup>13</sup> See [www.unescap.org/tid/unnext/tools/implement-guide.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/unnext/tools/implement-guide.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> See [www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2636.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2636.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See [www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2619.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2619.pdf)

In December 2011 UNECE and the European Port Community Systems Association EPCSA held a Seminar on How to develop a Port Community System. To support policy makers in the planning of Port Community Systems as part of the national Single Window approach, EPCSA has suggested jointly developing with UNECE a framework for PCS as part of a national trade facilitation strategy. This framework would complement the Single Window Implementation Framework which was developed in 2010 as an outcome of the EU ITAIDE project.

In May 2012 UNECE, together with UNCTAD, was asked by the Ministry of Transport of Jordan to train the members of the newly established National Committee and Technical Committees for Trade and Transport Facilitation (TTF) on relevant international conventions, standards and best practices. The country is engaged in a wide ranging modernization process, including for its trade and transport sectors.

The workshop, funded by the European Union, was organized in such context and was highly appreciated by both the participants and national authorities as well as by the donor. As a follow-up, the Ministry of Transport requested UNECE to participate in the second training workshop, to be held in November 2012. The focus is on the importance of the regional TTF coordination and implementation, as well as on Jordan TTF experience and goals.

In November 2012, UNECE organised a special workshop to train the national team of experts. The BPA Guide was also used in the recent trade facilitation needs assessment in Kazakhstan (analysis of export procedures of flower, candy, pasta and biscuits).

UNECE also conducted the breakout regional sessions of the Central Asian Countries organised during the Asia Trade Facilitation Fora. The Asia Trade Facilitation Forum is an annual event, organised by UNESCAP in cooperation with UNECE and various international donor organizations. Policymakers and UNNEXt experts from Central Asian countries met for a regional breakout session to discuss specific trade facilitation issues of their region.

Over the past year, and following a request from the European Commission Task Force on Greece (TFGR), UNECE assisted the Greek Government in the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy and road map for trade facilitation. The road map ([www.slideshare.net/notismitarachi/national-trade-facilitationstrategyroadmapoct2012](http://www.slideshare.net/notismitarachi/national-trade-facilitationstrategyroadmapoct2012)) contains a series of actions designed to identify and overcome regulatory and procedural bottlenecks and obstacles to Greek exports. This ambitious road-map foresees far-reaching reforms in the fields of exports and customs formalities. Responsibility for implementation lies with the Greek authorities. A high-level steering group is being created to oversee and manage the reform process.

It is estimated that the proposed measures could reduce time to export by 50% and costs by 20% by the end of 2015, thus leading to a 10% increase in export value and 80,000 new jobs. Using the UNNEXt Business Process Analysis Guide and methodologies, UNECE experts are currently assisting Greek authorities in a pilot project to analyse and simplify export process for specific agricultural products. The road map was formally presented on November 1<sup>st</sup> by the Greek Minister for Development and the Economy, Mr Kostis Hatzidakis. At the request of the TFGR, UNECE will continue to support the Greek government in the implementation of the road map in the coming year.

## 6. Training: Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide

Much of the aforementioned capacity-building and outreach activities involve a considerable element of training for experts in UNECE member States. UNECE launched the *Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide* (TFIG) in October 2012. The *Guide*, which was funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), is a web-based interactive tool designed to assist both policymakers and implementers in designing and implementing trade facilitation initiatives.

It consists of a practical generic *Guide* for implementing trade facilitation, bridging the gap between policy decisions and needs analysis, on the one hand, and the implementation of concrete facilitation measures, on the other; a related set of training material tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the countries/regions concerned; and several case studies integrated into both the *Guide* and the training material, covering experiences from all regions.

These project outputs are produced in English and are being translated into French and Russian. A series of regional training workshops on the use of the *Guide* will be organized in 2013.

The beneficiaries of the TFIG Project are all countries and regions, particularly developing and transition countries, as well as practitioners in the trade facilitation field (particularly in these countries), primarily government, business and technical experts at all levels working to implement trade facilitation measures.

These beneficiaries are helped to understand how to implement trade facilitation in the light of: developmental needs and priorities; the content of and interrelationship amongst relevant international conventions, standards, recommendations, tools and best practices; and possible outcomes of trade facilitation discussions at WTO and other fora.

The TFIG Project is managed by the UNECE secretariat and advised by a Project Team composed of UN/CEFACT experts.

In October 2012, Part 1 of the project was completed: an e-Guide to the instruments and tools for trade facilitation implementation, complemented by a set of training materials and a number of case stories on good practices from the main regional areas has been published.

At the same time, Part 2 of the project has been launched, and the UNECE secretariat has started to organize six training workshops for the five regions of the world. The first workshop targets the UNECE region, and will take place in January 2013.

## **Annex C**

### **Capacity-building activities of the Regional Advisor**

From February 2009 until December 2012, the Regional Adviser in the UNECE Trade Division undertook 49 missions; during 20 of them he organized important capacity-building events, he oversaw the development of 9 studies and 3 publications. During the biennium 2012-2013, over 10 countries with economies in transition should be implementing Single Window solutions. This will help raise the efficiency of trade procedures and good governance in foreign trade in those countries.

These were aimed at strengthening the technical capacities of national experts in trade facilitation and trade policy, and at supporting the establishment and/or strengthening of networks of experts. Success stories included the establishment of a Single Window in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the second in Europe after Sweden), various Single Window and trade facilitation projects started in Central Asia, Azerbaijan, other CIS countries, Mongolia and SE Europe, mostly with donor support, but also based on their own resources. The number of countries implementing Single Window solutions rose from three to nine. The number of participants rose to 786, instead of the planned 600. The unprecedented growth of capacity-building activities was due to the successful raising of external funds and the successful implementation of the fifth Tranche United Nations Development Account project on trade facilitation in Central Asia. Albania was the latest country to start projects on implementing a Single Window. During a UNECE-led regional seminar held there in September 2010, it also signed bilateral data-exchange agreements with two of its neighbours.

He finalized the 5th tranche Development Account Project in Central Asia, which led to the launching of several Single Windows and other trade facilitation projects, as well as the establishment of two networks: one of policy makers in trade (the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade) and one of public-private cooperation for trade facilitation. He played a key role in the establishment of a public-private, interagency Working Group for the establishment of a Single Window, local solution in Odessa, Ukraine. Strategic discussions concerning these developments will be taken up by the UNECE secretariat and the UN/CEFACT Bureau to focus on opportunities identified by the Regional Advisor for the development of new recommendations, standards and implementation guides by UN/CEFACT to advance these efforts on a timely basis.

The UNECE Regional Adviser oversaw the preparation of seven studies, five of which financed by the Government of Russian Federation. Three studies examined the readiness of the legal system and the technical data exchange systems in the Russian Federation for a Single Window, and one represented a feasibility study for the creation of a community information system in the airport of Vnukovo. They were used by various actors in Russia, Finland and the Commission of the Customs Union to create the basis of further useful projects. Four other studies on: the transit programme in Ukraine, the enabling legal and technical prerequisites for a Single Window in the Customs Union and the Single Window project in Uzbekistan have been finalized and presented at various capacity building events. These studies produced practical results, and were used for preparing a feasibility study and further trade facilitation implementation measures for establishing a Single Window in the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. In addition, a second, revised edition of the English-Russian Glossary of Trade

Facilitation Terms (prepared together with the secretariat of the Commission of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia) was published in 2012.

During recent meetings of UN/CEFACT and the UNECE Committee on Trade, 90% of member States with economies in transition expressed their satisfaction with the technical cooperation services provided under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) subprogramme in the area of trade, and requested further active technical cooperation with the transition economies in the future. Member States appreciated the usefulness of the methodologies, techniques and tools offered in the projects, finding them applicable at the national level.

## **Seminars/projects organized in 2009-2012**

Under the fifth Tranche of the UNDA project on trade facilitation in Central Asia, two seminars were organized in 2009: on trade facilitation at the border in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and on public-private cooperation for trade facilitation and the Single Window in Almaty. These two seminars (attended by vice-ministers) were landmarks in the development of the concepts of trade facilitation and the Single Window in Central Asia.

A Training seminars for policymakers and experts from Uzbekistan was organized a Tashkent and Gothenburg in 2009. These led to the development of a draft Action Plan for a Single Window in Uzbekistan, later discussed at the Council of Ministers of Uzbekistan. It was funded by donors: GTZ, USAID, and Sweden.

On 26-27 February 2012, Seminar on the Single Window, co-organized with the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade of Uzbekistan, UNDP and UNCTAD, following-up on the series of seminars organized by UNECE for Uzbekistan, in 2008-2009 and the pilot project on One Window (developed at those seminars and currently implemented in Uzbekistan). A first, pilot version was launched on 1 April 2012.

A first regional conference on trade facilitation, the Single Window, and data harmonization was held in Tbilisi, Georgia (2009), which fostered work on the development of Single Window systems and data harmonization in the region (the three countries of the South Caucasus participated in it).

On 14-15 June 2012, was held the Second Regional South Caucasus Conference (with participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine) on trade facilitation, the Single Window and trade data harmonization, in collaboration with the Government of Georgia and USAID - a follow-up event to the first Conference held on 23-24 June 2009 in Tbilisi, with the objective of promoting the use of international standards for trade facilitation; developing national Single Window projects and a regional initiative on data harmonization. More than 74 experts and policy makers took part in the 2nd Regional South Caucasus Conference.

Under the UNECE initiative on trade facilitation, the Single Window and data harmonization for Southeast Europe, three regional conferences were organized to underscore the achievements of the existing Single Window projects in the region, and outline the next steps, notably in data harmonization through following international standards:

- 3rd regional Southeast European seminar on Trade Facilitation, the Single Window and Data Harmonization held in Skopje in December 2009 to take stock of the development of the Single Window in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

- 4th regional Southeast European seminar on Trade Facilitation, the Single Window and Data Harmonization held in Durres, Albania, in September 2010. In addition to the traditional subject of progress in Single Window projects in the region, the seminar covered the issue of corridor exchange of Customs data, and led to the signature of bilateral Customs agreements on a simplified Customs transit data exchange between Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania and Montenegro.
- 5th regional Southeast European seminar on Trade Facilitation, the Single Window and Data Harmonization was held in Sarajevo 10 and 11 October 2011. The seminar was co-organized with the SEE Regional Cooperation Council (for which the Regional Adviser is the liaison officer in UNECE) and the UNDP office in Sarajevo. The seminar enhanced the work on the Single Window in the complex administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and further strengthened cooperation among several neighboring countries on these practical issues.

A workshop on the feasibility study was organized in Vnukovo Airport in Moscow (2009), and two workshops in St Petersburg (2009 and 2010) with the Interparliamentary Assembly of EurAsEC on the legal aspects of developing a Single Window project in the Russian Federation. They have been funded through the Russian Voluntary Contribution.

A Conference on Single Window, Data Exchange, Interagency and Public-Private Cooperation for Trade Facilitation, was held in Moscow, 7-8 April 2011, co-organized by the Commission of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia and the Interparliamentary Assembly of EurAsEC. At the Conference, the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and the Commission of the Customs Union, Messrs Kubis and Glazyev signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the two organizations. The Conference resulted in concrete decisions and recommendations on the further implementation of the Single Window principle and data exchange harmonization, based on established international standards.

Upon Invitation from EurAsEC, the Regional Adviser took part in the annual session of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of EurAsEC, which adopted a decision to work on the harmonization of national legislations and to prepare an enabling legal environment for electronic commerce and the Single Window.

These events brought to a qualitatively new stage the work on trade facilitation and the establishment of a Single Window in the Russian Federation.

A workshop on trade facilitation and investment was organized with the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine in Kiev (2010), which was followed by an initiative on a local Single Window in Odessa.

Two seminars on trade facilitation and the Single Window (local solution) in Odessa, Ukraine:

- Seminar on “The Single Window Concept and Integrated Railway Transportation to Facilitate Trade in the pan-European Space”, organized in Odessa on 1 June 2011 together with the Ukrainian Government and Plaske JSC, under the joint UNECE - Czech Republic project.
- Seminar “Local Single Window (Port Community System) for the Ports of the Odessa Region in the Perspective of the European Integration of Ukraine” with the same partners plus the European Port Community System Association and FIATA.

The two seminars' results include: (a) launch of a pilot project for a Single Window in the port of Odessa, brought to the attention of the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Azarov; (b) establishment of an inter-agency, public-private working group, which already held 7 meetings, most of which at the headquarters of Ukrainian Customs in Kiev to oversee the development of the project; (c) draft work plan; and (d) a request to UNECE to organize an inter-agency meeting on the alignment of the CIM/SMGS railway consignment note with the international standards for data exchange.

As a result of these activities, a founding meeting of an interagency, public-private working group in support of a possible Single Window pilot project took place in Kiev on 18 October 2011. This meeting followed up on the decisions of the seminar in Odessa on 1 June 2011.

A seminar on the alignment of the CIM/SMGS railway consignment note was held on 21 September 2011 during the week of the UN/CEFACT Forum in Geneva. The meeting issued five concrete recommendations on harmonizing the semantics of data elements, the possible use of data elements and whole data sets by different organizations, necessary legislative amendments, and further cooperation between the different sub-regional railway organizations.

The fourth SPECA Trade Working Group meeting was organized in Geneva (October 2009) and the fifth meeting, combined with the Ministerial meeting on Aid for Trade in the SPECA countries, in Baku, 1-2 December 2010. The 6th session of the SPECA PWG on Trade was organized in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 10 November 2011, and became also the founding meeting of the SPECA Aid-for-Trade Council. The 7th session of the SPECA PWG on Trade is planned to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, 26 November 2012.

Upon invitation from GIZ, the Regional Adviser participated as a keynote speaker at the Central Asian Regional Forum on Single Window Implementation in December 2010. It took stock of the current level of implementation of Single Window projects. Most of these were started as a result of the UN Development Account project on trade facilitation for the SPECA countries in 2006-2009. The meeting discussed the way forward in building the technical systems in these projects.

Upon invitation from ADB (CAREC), the Regional Adviser provided advisory services to the annual meeting of the CAREC Customs Cooperation and Trade Facilitation Committee, at which the countries reported on progress made in their Single Window and other trade facilitation projects.

The Regional Adviser continued managing several technical cooperation projects, notably the project on creating an enabling environment for the Single Window in the Russian Federation and then the Customs Union, as well as the Czech-UNECE technical assistance project for selected countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The Regional Adviser carried out a series of other advisory missions to Budva (Montenegro) - at the annual summit of the Regional Cooperation Council (Sarajevo, Southeast Europe), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan); Moscow and St. Petersburg (Russian Federation); Ljubljana (Slovenia); Astana and Almaty (Kazakhstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan – on cooperation projects with Afghanistan); Kiev and Odessa (Ukraine); Tbilisi, Poti and Batumi (Georgia); Sofia (Bulgaria – on Port Community Systems); and Belgrade (Serbia). The mission to Dushanbe led to the establishment of highly praised project on cooperation in Customs data exchange with Afghanistan and the one to Sofia to a project on a port community system in Bulgaria.