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

Revision of Recommendation 2: Semantic information and codes in international trade data exchange

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A little history...

- Rec. 2 was proposed in the 1970s. Was initially a very simple text:
  - In order to ensure mutual understanding and avoid difficulties linked to language, all information that can be codified should be codified.

- Quickly it was integrated into Rec.1 (on UN Layout Key)

- The recent revision of Rec.1 (2017) did include this concept, but it is not stated as explicitly.
Why a Rec2 now?

- There is a growing interest / push to use international standards
- There are new methods of exchanges which may be creating confusion (blockchain, API, big data, ontologies)...
- UN/CEFACT has developed a very comprehensive set of semantic standards and code lists which are not always well known.
Why are semantics important?

• To ensure clear understanding of information between the parties involved in the exchange of data.

• A single term such as the “date-time of arrival” may have different meaning depending on the partners who are using it
  • a port terminal,
  • a warehouse,
  • a manufacturing factory...

• “words mean what I wants them to mean”
Enter into a Rec the key UN/CEFACT concepts used throughout its e-business standards

- The basis of the work (semantics, codes, code lists)
- Base principle of going from paper to paperless (Rec34)
- Whole of supply chain approach (everything interoperable)
- The principle of a hierarchical (structured) list of data
- Buy-Ship-Pay model (and expanding this)
- Relationship between commercial and logistics info (need to distinguish between “Shipment” and “Consignment”)
Two annexes

- Full list of all code lists maintained and developed by UN/CEFACT
- Base semantic anchors
- Both presented as annexes so that they can more easily be updated if needed
New work identified

• Becoming very apparent that a revision of Rec8 (UNIC) will be needed