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Report from the secretariat

**Report on the UN/LOCODE activities since the 2022
meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group**

Summary

The secretariat prepared a report detailing the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) activities since its last meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group in 2022.

The report provides a summary of the major activities and the developments related to UN/LOCODE, such as the ad-hoc meetings of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy held on 29 June 2022 and 13 April 2021, the follow-up and developments on the use of UN/LOCODE for sustainable fisheries and maritime security, and the UN/LOCODE maintenance.

This document is submitted to the 2023 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for information.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) identifies locations uniquely and unambiguously for international trade and transport. It is a five-character code where the first two characters represent the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country/territory code (ISO 3166-1) followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
2. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, established under UN/CEFACT, advises and supports the UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT in the maintenance and further expansion of UN/LOCODE.
3. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group was established by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) in 2017 (decision ECE/EX/2017/L.10) and was further extended for two years in 2019 (decision ECE/EX/2019/L.6). Its mandate expired in June 2021.
4. Considering the valuable work of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the UN/CEFACT Bureau, at its meeting on 17 November 2021, decided to propose that the UN/CEFACT Plenary give a new mandate to the advisory group to support the secretariat in maintaining UN/LOCODE for a period of two years. The UN/CEFACT Plenary adopted the mandate and terms of reference and draft programme of work for the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group through an intersessional approval procedure (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/15, paras. 74–81), held from 23 November 2021 to 23 January 2022. On 24 March 2022, EXCOM approved the mandate and terms of reference of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for the period of 2022-2023.

II. Overview of new developments

5. In 2022, the secretariat, supported by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, has processed two updates to the UN/LOCODE directory: 2022-1 and 2022-2. These were published on the UNECE website in July and December 2022, as scheduled.¹
6. The secretariat has continued to work to enhance the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network. Since the last annual meeting, the network has been expanded by the new nominations of Chile and Egypt, and the renominations of Sweden.²
7. The UNECE secretariat has been working with the FAO secretariat on the use of UN/LOCODE to support the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing due to its importance as the international standard to guarantee consistency and accuracy when identifying and exchanging information on ports, especially for the designated ports (DPs) under the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA). Discussions on UN/LOCODE were held at the Third Meeting of the PSMA Parties (MOP3) in 2021, however, remained inconclusive. Therefore, the discussion on whether UN/LOCODE should be required when exchanging information on DPs was deferred to the Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE).
8. As a follow-up on the use of UN/LOCODE in sustainable fisheries management, the secretariat attended the Sixth Meeting of the Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Working Group (GRWG6) on 12 December 2022 and the Third Meeting of the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE3) on 13-14 December 2022 in Rome, Italy. The secretariat was invited to make a presentation on UN/LOCODE at GRWG6 and discuss at TWG-IE3 whether to make the use of UN/LOCODE compulsory.
 - Regarding UN/LOCODE as an identifier for the port of registry of fishing vessels uploaded on the Global Record, GRWG noted that not all vessel

¹ See <http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>.

² See <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/unlocode/NFPs>.

registration ports currently have a UN/LOCODE. In this regard, the Group welcomed UNECE providing a process whereby ports not currently registered with a UN/LOCODE could be registered within 6 months of asking, and that new types or categories of ports could be added to the UN/LOCODE directory in the future if deemed necessary. The Group expressed concerns that these 6 months could be too long in some cases.

- Concerning the use of the UN/LOCODE for identifying designated ports under PSMA, TWG-IE made the following recommendation which will be submitted to the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA (MOP4), to be held on 08-12 May 2023, in Bali, Indonesia: TWG-IE highlighted the importance of ensuring that all designated ports under the PSMA, have been attributed a UN/LOCODE, when possible.
9. The secretariat attended, online, the 47th Session of the Facilitation Committee (FAL 47) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on 13-17 March 2023. Considering a recommendation of only using GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) for vessel-berth compatibility check in the Guidelines for Harmonized Communication and Electronic Exchange of Operational Data for Port Call, the secretariat contacted the IMO secretariat to raise the following concerns:
- it might be misinterpreted as a mandatory use of GS1 GLN in berth positioning in the maritime sector;
 - UN/LOCODE with IMO Facility Number could also serve this use case; and
 - GS1 GLN is a proprietary and paid service (yearly subscription) which can adversely affect trade facilitation.
10. Therefore, the secretariat requested to remove the recommendation mentioned above or at least reword it by adding UN/LOCODE plus IMO Facility Number as another recommended option. Finally, it was resolved with the satisfaction of the secretariat and the user community by removing the recommendation in the guidelines as requested.
11. The secretariat would like to express gratitude to the IMO secretariat, especially the UN/LOCODE Focal Point for IMO, for their coordination and to Ms. Sue Probert, Chair of UN/CEFACT and Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, Ms. Maria Teresa Chavarri, Vice-Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group and Convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, Ms. Hanane Bache, Vice-Chair of UN/CEFACT, Mr. Falk Bethke, NFP for Germany and other experts, including Mr. Feargal Hogan and Mr. Michael Schroeder, for their support on sorting out this issue.
12. The lesson learned from the issue mentioned above is that GS1 GLN is adopted as ISO/IEC 6523, which offers more chances to be accepted in various industries, including the maritime sector. In this regard, the secretariat would like to explore the possibility to fast track UN/LOCODE as an ISO standard.
13. In the framework of ebMoU, where a coordination mechanism is specified to develop standards in the area of electronic business, the secretariat works with ISO/TC 154 (Processes, data elements and documents in commerce, industry and administration) on several joint activities, including the fast-track of the UN/CEFACT Buy-Ship-Pay Reference Data Model as ISO 20197. The secretariat would study the feasibility to fast-track UN/LOCODE under ISO TC 154.
14. The ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency (MA) held its Plenary session in Geneva in October 2022. The next revision of its Terms of Reference (ToRs) was discussed, which would address several outstanding issues, including:
- Addition of reference to the FAQ
 - Clearer linkage of country codes to UN member state status

- Revision of reference to administrative languages and inclusion of locally-official languages

15. The MA had identified a task force to work on the update to ISO 3166-2, which is published at the end of each year. Usually, national ‘administrative languages’ are recorded in ISO 3166-1. These are the only languages that can be used in ISO 3166-2 for subdivisions. In some countries, there are other languages, which have locally-official status and in which there are subdivision names. Considering the political nature of regional or minority languages, the way these names are currently treated in 3166-2 is somewhat inconsistent. The definition of an administrative language or a regionally/locally-official language also needs to be considered. Therefore, this task force would conduct a review of the administrative languages used in ISO 3166 and propose a consistent approach.

16. The secretariat would like to highlight the recent work of the UN/CEFACT JSON-LD Web Vocabulary Project³ launched in December 2021. The aim of the project is to deliver a high-quality JSON-LD vocabulary that can be used to express all UN/CEFACT schematics. It provides an additional source to access the UN/LOCODE code list in both a human and machine-readable format. To use the JSON-LD web vocabulary to represent UN/LOCODE, one would need to follow the JSON-LD syntax and use the @context keyword to declare the vocabulary source. Then, one would use the appropriate terms from Schema.org to describe the location entity, such as Country, Functions, Subdivision, Latitude and Longitude coordinates etc.

III. UN/LOCODE maintenance

17. Led by the Convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, with the support of the secretariat, the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team has been working on the validation of the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) with the collaborative maintenance procedure in line with UNECE Recommendation 164. The team benefitted from the collaboration between the public and private sectors, including national UN/LOCODE focal points appointed by governments, industry experts, and the secretariat.

18. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team conducts its work via online meetings. All team members are welcome to attend the weekly meeting. There is no obligation to participate in all the meetings; however, the DMR submitters must be present to justify their DMRs.

19. The first ad-hoc meeting of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy took place on 29 June 2022, following the last annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. The secretariat would like to draw attention to the following discussion points summed up in the meeting minutes⁵ :

- The team agreed to pin the centre of a requested area as representative geo-coordinates.
- The secretariat agreed not to bring function “B” back to Recommendation No. 16 and continue to type “Border” in the column “remarks” to indicate a location on the border.

20. As suggested, a meeting to discuss the UN/LOCODE maintenance policy should be held beforehand in order to submit recommendations to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for decision. On 13 April 2023, before the 2023 meeting of the UN/LOCODE

³ Available at <https://vocabulary.uncefact.org/unlocode-countries>

⁴ UNECE Recommendation No. 16: United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (ECE/TRADE/459). Available at <https://unece.org/info/Trade/CEFACT/pub/21828>.

⁵ Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/LOCODE_AdhocMtg-Minutes_2022.pdf

Advisory Group, the secretariat held the second ad-hoc meeting of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy to discuss ten maintenance issues raised in the recent maintenance cycles.

21. Before the meeting, the secretariat coordinated to finalize a working document including all the maintenance issues raised since the last ad-hoc meeting. For each maintenance issue, the secretariat or one expert volunteered to lead the discussion and conclude relevant recommendations to be submitted to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for approval.

22. The secretariat would like to express gratitude to the following experts, Ms. Maria Teresa Chavarri, Mr. Feargal Hogan, Mr. Michael Schroeder, Mr. Heng Yeong Chiam, Mr. Wenfeng Sun and Mr. Tiago Spengler for their contributions as a lead to finalizing the discussion and recommendations on the maintenance issues.

23. After the fruitful discussions at the second ad-hoc meeting, the Group submitted draft recommendations (document UNLOCODE-AG/2023/INF.3) for decision.

24. As requested, the secretariat will organize a workshop on the UN/LOCODE maintenance in a hybrid mode on 12 May 2023 back-to-back with the next meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

IV. UN/LOCODE system

25. As reported at the last meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, the secretariat was informed by the UNECE Information Systems Unit that the current UN/LOCODE system is non-compliant with the Minimum-Security Requirements for Public Websites of the United Nations ICT Technical Procedure. The Office of Information Communication Technology (OICT) informed the secretariat that such a non-compliant application poses an operational and reputational risk to the secretariat, and access to the website will be limited until any missing or insufficient controls have been updated.

26. The secretariat has been working on hiring a consultant to fix the cyber security problem by the end of June 2023. Meanwhile, the secretariat is raising funds to re-develop a new system.

27. The secretariat has dealt with a lot of queries related to the so-called shutdown of UN/LOCODE by UNECE, which might be triggered by the misinterpretation of the warning flag on the current UN/LOCODE system mentioned above. The secretariat would like to clarify that UNECE has no intentions to stop UN/LOCODE and will provide better services to the UN/LOCODE user community, including improving the UN/LOCODE system.

28. At the last meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, an Open-Source solution was presented to propose a proof of concept for using GitHub for the UN/LOCODE maintenance. The secretariat organized a meeting with the interested members, including the representatives of experts and the EC, to discuss the proposed solution.

29. In the context of a joint initiative called “Mind the Open-Source Gap” launched by OICT and the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET), the secretariat attended a workshop on Open-Source on 15 March 2023 organized by OICT. Following the workshop, the secretariat reached out to the head of the Open-Source Unit in OICT to set up a joint Open-Source project on GitHub for the UN/LOCODE maintenance.

V. Programme of Work for 2024-2025

30. The secretariat prepared the draft Programme of Work (PoW) for 2024-2025 (document UNLOCODE-AG/2023/INF.4) for approval of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. Upon its approval, the secretariat will submit it to the next UN/CEFACT Plenary to request to extend the mandate of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group to another term (2024-2025).
