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**Economic Commission for Europe**

Executive Committee

**Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business****Twenty-eighth session**

Geneva, 10-11 (am) October 2022

**Report of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation  
and Electronic Business on its twenty-eighth session****I. Attendance**

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its twenty-eighth Plenary session as a hybrid meeting with virtual and in-person participation on 10 and 11 October 2022.
2. The following countries were represented: Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, China, Congo (Republic of), Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Morocco, the Netherlands, Panama, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, United States of America, Viet Nam.
3. The following United Nations organizations participated in the meeting: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Sustainable Transport Division, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Trade Centre (ITC), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The following non-governmental and observer organizations participated in the meeting: Global Standards 1 (GS1) and Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation (AFACT).
4. The ECE Deputy Executive Secretary welcomed delegates participating in-person and online. He emphasised the value and relevance of the UN/CEFACT work, including its contribution to addressing global challenges affecting international trade. He highlighted the ECE's upcoming seventieth session focusing on "*Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the ECE*". UN/CEFACT should be able to significantly contribute to these endeavours, considering its existing and future body of work. He also emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration between ECE's sub-programmes, for example, the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD) and the Sustainable Transport Divisions on related aspects of multi-modal supply chains.
5. The ECTD Director opened the meeting. She underlined the numerous achievements of UN/CEFACT, particularly since the last Plenary and thanked the experts, the Bureau and the ECE secretariat for their contributions. She emphasized the great relevance of the key deliverables on this Plenary's agenda such as the revised *Recommendation No.2 on ECE Layout Key*, the deliverables in support of sustainable development and circular economy, which follow-up on the outcomes of ECE's sixty-ninth session and contribute to the



preparations of the ECE's seventieth session, and the reports of the eDATA Management, Finance and Payment, and Trade Procedures Facilitation Domains.

6. The importance of capacity building work, which has been particularly relevant in the COVID-19 recovery phase, was also emphasised by the ECTD Director in her opening remarks. ECE member States will benefit from the findings and recommendations of the *Policy Brief on Advancing Digital and Sustainable Trade in ECE Economies in Transition*, the *Business Process Analysis for Exports of Pharmaceutical Products from Georgia to the Central Asian Countries*, and the *Training Material on Helping MSMEs to Digitalize their Procedures*. On the way forward, she highlighted the importance of ensuring the continued relevance and enhanced impact of UN/CEFACT work, especially in the context of tackling ongoing disruptions of supply chains following the public health crises and regional conflicts.

7. The UN/CEFACT Chair welcomed the delegates from all over the globe. She called upon the UN/CEFACT members to seek more resources to provide to the ECE secretariat besides volunteer experts. She also mentioned the importance of succession planning of the UN/CEFACT Bureau. She noted that the Vice-chairs elected last year were at the second year of their term and that the Chair was at the second term. Therefore, she drew the members' attention to looking for new UN/CEFACT Bureau officers.

## II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

8. ECE secretariat informed the Plenary that the draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/1/Rev.1.

9. The amendments included additional documents, updated titles, additional translation of informal documents, merge of agenda items 10 and 11 as well as modifications to the provisional timetable in the effort to accommodate the timing constraints of a hybrid meeting.

**Plenary decision 22-01:** The Plenary adopted the *Revised Provisional Agenda for the Twenty-Eighth Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/1/Rev.1).

## III. Matters arising since the twenty-seventh session (agenda item 2)

10. ECE secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/3, *Matters Arising Since the Twenty-Seventh Session*. The document provides a summary of the main developments in the work of UN/CEFACT and an overview of the ECE secretariat's outreach and support activities to enhance the implementation of ECE and UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business. This report highlights:

- the efforts on addressing supply chain disruptions, including through digitalization and dematerialization as well as electronic certificates. These are particularly relevant in line with the upcoming ECE's seventieth Commission session scheduled for April 2023, which will focus on "*Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the ECE*";
- the work of the ECE secretariat in support of its member States' transition to sustainable development and circular economy, as an outcome of the ECE's sixty ninth Commission session. This work includes the newly established Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy;
- the capacity-building activities and technical assistance provided to Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, India, Italy, Kyrgyz Republic, Peru, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan;

- the collaboration with other United Nations entities such as the ECE Sustainable Transport Division, the ECE Market Access Section, UNCTAD, the ITC and the other United Nations Regional Commissions; and
- the collaboration with regional bodies such as the Eurasian Economic Commission and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE); Directorate-General for Taxation and the Customs Union (DG TAXUD); Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE); Directorate-General for Informatics (DG DIGIT); Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA); and Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW).

11. The ECE Regional Adviser submitted a report (ECE/TRADE/CEFACT/2022/4) which outlines the activities linked to the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), the assistance on the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the implementation of UN/CEFACT semantic standards and reference data models.

**Plenary decision 22-02:** The Plenary took note of the report on the *Matters Arising Since the Twenty-Seventh Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/3) and requested that ECE secretariat report on matters arising at the next Plenary session in 2023.

**Plenary decision 22-03:** The Plenary took note of the *Report from ECE Regional Adviser* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/4).

12. The delegation of Ukraine expressed appreciation for the work of UN/CEFACT, the ECE secretariat and Regional Adviser, emphasizing the activities on digitalization and circular economy. It highlighted key UN/CEFACT deliverables, including ECE Trade Facilitation Recommendations No. 36, No. 37, No. 44, and No. 47. It further highlighted the relevance of UN/CEFACT activities, especially in the context of regional conflicts, and stressed on the importance of advancing trade corridors.

13. The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed appreciation for the work of UN/CEFACT in the reporting period and its contribution to the WTO TFA implementation. It welcomed the contribution of UN/CEFACT to the Centre for Trade Facilitation of the Kyrgyz Republic and the work on ensuring interoperability of systems and cooperation between participants in value chains in priority sectors focused on the transition to a circular economy. It positively noted the results of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy and the work in the SPECA region. The delegation underlined the importance of the UN/CEFACT work in view of the seventieth Commission session.

#### IV. Bureau overview of developments (agenda item 3)

14. The Chair presented the *Bureau Report of Developments* from the twenty-seventh session until August 2022, including Bureau decisions, summary or promotional activities and project activities in each programme development area (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/5). The report highlights:

- eighteen regular Bureau calls, discussing project development and procedural points;
- 98 Bureau decisions, as detailed in its Annex I;
- 90 events in which UN/CEFACT was represented, detailed in its Annex II;
- 39 projects which were active during this period, detailed in its Annex III;
- 1631 experts registered within UN/CEFACT; and
- the extension of the mandate of all Domain Coordinators and Focal Points for an additional year until 15 July 2023.

15. The Chair announced the dates of the second UN/CEFACT Forum to be held online on 5 and 6 December 2022. This Forum will be an opportunity for experts to share progress

on their activities and to advance project implementation. She further invited any Member States willing to contribute to the preparations to contact the secretariat.

16. The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed its appreciation to the UN/CEFACT Bureau and the secretariat for their valuable work.

**Plenary decision 22-04:** The Plenary took note of the *UN/CEFACT Bureau Report of Developments* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/5) and requested that the Bureau reports on developments again in 2023.

## V. Reports of rapporteurs (agenda item 4)

17. The Regional Rapporteurs presented their reports contained in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/6. The document consists of the reports received from the Rapporteur for Sub-Saharan Africa (Annex I) and the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific (Annex II).

18. These reports underline the regional initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. It also provides an overview of meetings, including those where UN/CEFACT deliverables were discussed.

**Plenary decision 22-05:** The Plenary took note of the *UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteurs Reports* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/6) and requested the reports to be provided at the next Plenary session in 2023.

## VI. Recommendation for approval (agenda item 5a)

19. ECE secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/7, revised *Recommendation No.2: ECE Layout Key: Semantic Information and Codes in International Trade Data Exchange*, submitted to the Plenary for approval. This document represents a revision of 1981 Recommendation on ECE Layout Key and it aims at promoting the use of clear, structured semantics and coded information in data exchange. This Recommendation with its guidelines provides a clear definition of key concepts, elaborates on the supply chain process-driven approach to trade data exchanges, outlines the structure of electronic data exchanges and lists key semantic anchors.

20. The Chair expressed appreciation to the project leader and the project team for their hard work.

**Plenary decision 22-06:** The Plenary approved the *Recommendation No. 2: Revision of ECE Layout Key: Semantic Information and Codes in International Trade Data Exchange* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/7).

## VII. Deliverables in support of sustainable development and circular economy as the outcomes of the sixty-ninth session of the ECE (agenda item 5b)

21. ECE secretariat presented the following deliverables in support of sustainable development and circular economy, for information:

- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/8, *Enhancing Traceability of Products Along International Value Chains for the Circular Economy and Sustainable Use of Resources*. This draft policy brief has been developed in the framework of the UNDA project titled “*Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the ECE region*” in response to the outcome of the sixty-ninth ECE Commission Session. It outlines a set of policy options for consideration by policymakers in key sectors, which include agriculture, mineral raw materials and textiles. The document went through the multistakeholder consultation, and it is planned to be finalized for the seventieth ECE Commission session in April 2023;

- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/9, *Report on Blockchain Pilots Project for the Garment and Footwear Sector*. This draft proof-of-concept report presents key findings from the ongoing Blockchain Pilot Project: *Harnessing the potential of blockchain technology for due diligence and sustainability in cotton and leather value chains*. The pilot included 13 use cases, 73 partners in 20 countries across all regions of the world. This project has engaged representatives from the global cotton and leather industry to test the application of the ECE traceability and transparency standard in a blockchain system to trace products. It uses a multistakeholder approach and covers global value chains. The draft report also provides recommendations regarding the key implementation challenges for the use of blockchain technology, as well as opportunities for expanding the project to cover other textile and leather fibres and materials;
- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/10, *Enabling Sustainability and Circularity in the Garment and Footwear Sector: Policy Developments and Industry Perspectives on Traceability and Transparency*. This report summarizes the results of the desk and field research carried out in 2020 as background work to the drafting of Recommendation No. 46, with its implementation guidelines, and call to action, which constitute the key output of the ECE project “*Enhancing traceability and transparency for more sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear sector*”. This project is being implemented with the UN/CEFACT in collaboration with the ITC, and with funding from the European Union; and
- ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.1, *Reference Guide on Code Lists and Identifiers in Garment and Footwear Value Chains*. Codes and identifiers are essential components of any machine-to-machine information flow. They have been developed over time to facilitate the flow of standardized data that can be easily validated for correctness to ensure consistent semantics. The purpose of this Reference Guide is to identify and describe code lists and identification schemes supporting business processes and transactions for traceability and transparency in the textile and leather value chains.

22. ECE secretariat updated the Plenary on the progress on the Call to Action for Recommendation No. 46: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/6/Rev.1) – “The Sustainability Pledge”. ECE received about 100 pledges from 350 industry actors demonstrating tangible commitments to advancing the sustainable and circular transformation of the industry. The secretariat urged to spread the uptake of the ECE toolkit on traceability in garment and footwear and thanked the delegation of the Russian Federation for the statement in appreciation of the project.

23. The Chair expressed appreciation to UN/CEFACT experts and the project leader for their hard work.

**Plenary decision 22-07:** The Plenary took note of the draft *Policy Brief on Enhancing Traceability of Products Along International Value Chains for the Circular Economy and Sustainable Use of Resources* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/8); the draft *Report on Blockchain Pilots Project for the Garment and Footwear Sector* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/9); the *Report on Enabling Sustainability and Circularity in the Garment and Footwear Sector: Policy Developments and Industry Perspectives on Traceability and Transparency* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/10); and the *Reference Guide on Code Lists and Identifiers in the Textile and Leather Value Chains* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.1)

## VIII. Standards for noting (agenda item 5c)

24. The Chair announced that, since the last Plenary, and according to agreed UN/CEFACT procedures, the secretariat had issued:

- Versions 21A, 21B and 22A of UN/CEFACT Core Component Library;
- Versions 21A, 21B and 22A of UN/CEFACT XML Schema Library;

- Versions D.21A, D.21B and D.22A of UN/EDIFACT Directory;
- Versions 2021-1, 2021-2, 2022-1 of UN/LOCODE Directory;
- Version 1.1 of Core Components Business Document Assembly Technical Specification (CCBDA);
- Version 2.1.1 of XML Naming and Design Rules for CCTS 2.01;
- Application Programming Interface Technical Specification JSON schema naming and design rules;
- Application Programming Interface Technical Specification Open API naming and design rules;
- Experience Programs Information Exchange e-business standard;
- Business Requirement Specification for Integrated Track and Trace for Multi-Modal Transportation;
- Preferential E-Certificate of Origin e-business standard;
- Business Requirement Specification for Trade Information Portal;
- Cross-Border Management Reference Data Model and e-business standard;
- E-Negotiation e-business standard;
- Business Requirement Specification for Cross Industry Despatch and Receive Process;
- Cross Industry Scheduling Process e-business standard;
- Transport and Logistics modal specific (air) e-business standards; and
- IMO FAL Compendium e-business standard.

25. The Chair expressed appreciation to the UN/CEFACT technical and e-business expert teams that develop and maintain these standards and technical specifications.

**Plenary decision 22-08:** The Plenary took note of the standards and technical specifications presented by the Chair and requested that they continue to be updated on a regular basis.

## **IX. Implementation support material (agenda item 5d)**

26. UN/CEFACT eDATA Management Domain provided the following deliverables to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/11, *Report of the eDATA Management Domain on the Internet of Things in Trade Facilitation: Internet of Things in Supply Chains and Government Services*. This document outlines the benefits of the internet of things (IoT) and looks at how IoT can be specifically used to support trade and some of the legal challenges faced by IoT system implementors;
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/12, *Report of the eDATA Management Domain on the Internet of Things in Trade Facilitation: Guide to Internet of Things Technology, Communications and Connectivity* was presented to the Plenary for noting. This document provides an overview of the technologies used in IoT for trade-related applications – the objective being to provide explanations that are accessible to managers responsible for implementing information technology;
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/13, *Report of eDATA Management Domain on Internet of Things Standards for Trade Facilitation* was presented to the Plenary for noting. This report highlights the role that UN/CEFACT standards can play in defining data and process flows between IoT devices operated by various parties as part of an international supply chain and how this data can be integrated into existing supply chain automation processes in an interoperable manner. It provides

examples of IoT data, process and information exchange standards and identifies data needs for the wider adoption of IoT in trade facilitation applications; and

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/16, *Report of eDATA Management Domain on Verifiable Credentials for Cross-Border Trade* was presented to the Plenary for noting. It describes a highly scalable operating model for digitisation and trust of cross border trade based on verifiable credentials, linked data, and decentralised identifiers. Moreover, it provides national regulators with comprehensive implementation guidance.

**Plenary decision 22-09:** The Plenary took note of the following reports of eDATA Management Domain: the *Report on Internet of Things in Trade Facilitation: Internet of Things in Supply Chains and Government Services* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/11), the *Report on Internet of Things in Trade Facilitation: Guide to Internet of Things Technology, Communications and Connectivity* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/12), the *Report on Internet of Things Standards for Trade Facilitation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/13), and the *Report on Verifiable Credentials for Cross-Border Trade* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/16).

27. UN/CEFACT Finance and Payment Domain provided the following deliverables to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/14, *Report of Finance and Payment Domain on Open Finance to Support Trade Facilitation*. This report investigates the economic paradigms of open banking and open finance to understand how they can facilitate trade worldwide. It provides an overview of open banking in the European Union and in seven other countries. In addition to defining fintech and open finance, the report describes open finance use cases for trade facilitation and suggests a way forward for policy and decision makers.

**Plenary decision 22-10:** The Plenary took note of the *Report of Finance and Payment Domain on Open Finance to Support Trade Facilitation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/14).

28. UN/CEFACT Trade Procedures Facilitation Domain provided the following deliverables to the Plenary for noting:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/15, *Report of Trade Procedures Facilitation Domain on Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies*. This report evaluates practices and solutions to strengthen private sector participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies (NTFBs), to make them more effective and to strengthen the impact of NTFBs on trade facilitation reforms. It addresses the challenge of mobilizing private sector engagement and provides guidance on designing and facilitating an NTFB with a view to strengthen the contribution, ownership, and representation of the private sector. It complements ECE Recommendation No. 4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies and Recommendation No. 40 on Consultation Approaches by providing focused insights on the ability of NTFBs to facilitate private-public dialogue.

**Plenary decision 22-11:** The Plenary took note of the *Report of Trade Procedures Facilitation Domain on Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/15).

29. The secretariat presented the Russian translation of the *Report of Supply Chain and Procurement Domain on Integrated Track and Trace for Multi-Modal Transportation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.4). This document was presented to the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT Plenary and was translated into Russian.

**Plenary decision 22-12:** The Plenary took note of the Russian translation of the *Report of Supply Chain and Procurement Domain on Integrated Track and Trace for Multi-Modal Transportation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.4).

## X. Support to capacity building and technical cooperation (agenda item 5e)

30. The secretariat and UN/CEFACT experts presented the documents related to support to capacity building and technical cooperation.

31. Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/17, *Policy Brief – Advancing Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in ECE Economies in Transition* was presented to the Plenary for information. This document was prepared in the framework of the UNDA project “Evidence-based trade facilitation measures for economies in transition” and following the UNECE Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, which assessed progress in implementing trade facilitation measures in the region, focusing on economies in transition. It provides a deeper analysis and identifies challenges encountered by the seventeen participating countries in implementing the measures and provides policy recommendations that can accelerate the pace of implementation and leverage the potential of trade as an engine for sustainable development.

32. The secretariat also presented document ECE/TRADE/471, *Business Process Analysis for Exports of Pharmaceutical Products under Harmonized System (HS) Heading 30.03 and 30.04 (Medicaments) from Georgia to the Central Asian Countries*. This BPA provides an overview of the general trade and regulatory context of Georgia and an analysis of the key economic figures of the pharmaceutical sector, such as industry composition and dynamics, and exports. It gives an overview of the country’s transport networks and presents key facts of the sector and identifies possible bottlenecks in and proposes solutions for the trade-related regulatory and commercial procedures for exporting pharmaceutical products to the Central Asian countries.

33. The *Training Material on Helping Micro- Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to Digitalize Their Procedures* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.1) was presented to the Plenary for information. It was prepared in the framework of the UNDA project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector” and represents a compilation of literature from different institutions, essentially on electronic data exchange. It aims to support micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with digitalizing their procedures, including through the UN/CEFACT standards and solutions.

34. UN/CEFACT has continued to develop Executive Guides that aim to provide a brief, high-level description of the technical work of UN/CEFACT. Three guides were presented to the Plenary for noting:

- *Executive Guide on Electronic Certification Management System for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/18). The guide provides a generic, best praxis description for the workflow, with the goal of supporting government officials and traders in controlling export of fresh fruit and vegetables in an electronic environment;
- *Executive Guide on eNegotiation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/19). This executive guide on e-negotiation describes a business requirements specification for e-negotiation, which can be applied to the process of coordinating and negotiating the terms and conditions of trade between business entities in various business domains and provides useful scenarios for its application; and
- *Executive Guide to Sustainable Tourism Experience Programs Technical Artefacts* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/20). This guide presents the Experience Programs Technical Artefacts Project, which encompasses both local and global experience programs, and presents the outputs of the project and the way forward.

35. The secretariat presented the Russian translation of the following documents, which were presented as English-only documents to the twenty-seventh Plenary of UN/CEFACT:

- *Training Material on the Implementation of Single Window* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.5);



- *Training Material on the Use of International Standards* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.6); and
- *Training Material on National Trade Facilitation Bodies* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.7).

36. The secretariat presented the document *Guide to the Implementation of Art.1 para.3 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: Trade Facilitation Enquiry Points* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.3), which aims to support the SPECA participating countries, as well as any United Nations and/or WTO Member seeking to establish or improve the functioning of an existing Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point.

37. The Chair thanked the secretariat and the project teams for putting these together.

**Plenary decision 22-13:** The Plenary took note of the capacity building and technical cooperation documents.

## **XI. United Nations Regional Commissions joint approach to trade facilitation (agenda item 5f)**

38. A *Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation UNECE Regional Report 2021* (ECE/TRADE/467) was presented to the Plenary for information. This report has been produced based on the results of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation and represents a collaborative initiative under the Joint United Nations Regional Commissions' Approach, agreed in Beirut in January 2010 by the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions. Forty-four ECE countries submitted their contributions to the 2021 edition of the Survey.

39. The purpose of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade is to assess progress in implementing trade facilitation measures and thus help identify policy, legal, procedural, regulatory and technical gaps that affect implementation of such measures. It is particularly relevant for the participation of developing countries in global value chains, trade in manufactured goods and regional integration.

**Plenary decision 22-14:** The Plenary took note of the *Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation ECE Regional Report 2021* (ECE/TRADE/467) and requested that work continues on this topic.

## **XII. UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures (agenda item 6)**

40. The Bureau prepared a new Programme of Work for the period 2023-2024 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/21). The Chair underlined that this document was prepared in consultation with all UN/CEFACT experts and is based, like the previous ones, on the UN/CEFACT strategy document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1). UN/CEFACT plans to continue the core activities including work on new technologies and has been enhanced to include key themes on sustainability, circularity and digitalization.

41. The delegation of the Russian Federation welcomed this ambitious and complex Programme of Work and encouraged its successful implementation. It noted the following areas of work of relevance to the Russian Federation: interoperability of data, the revision and update of recommendations and standards, and capacity building for their uptake. It urged the holding of the UN/CEFACT Forum twice per year to continue communication activities and raise awareness about the UN/CEFACT toolbox. It welcomed the UN/CEFACT project on Single Window Assessment Methodology and projects such as paperless data and document exchange in the cross-border transport of specific goods between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union. With regard to the priorities for the future work of UN/CEFACT, the delegation highlighted the following directions: include Business to Government (B2G) data exchange in the standards development; foster semantic interoperability between transport and trade by aligning vocabularies and implementing UN/CEFACT multi-modal transport and trade standards; explore the use of

cryptocurrencies in international trade; support the digitalization of transit across the Eurasian Economic Union based on UN/CEFACT standards.

42. The delegation of the United States of America expressed appreciation for the leadership of the UN/CEFACT Chair, thanked the experts and the secretariat for their work. It raised the issue of the limited resources for the secretariat, noting that they do not increase in proportion to a growing number of projects and deliverables. It requested the secretariat to assess the level of involvement in projects and hold consultations with member States to identify projects in line with the UN/CEFACT Programme of Work and assess their relevance to the seventieth Commission session. It stressed the importance of collaboration with the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) and the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15) to avoid replication of work.

43. The Chair thanked the delegations for the intervention and highlighted the UN/CEFACT collaboration with the Sustainable Transport Division of ECE as well as the International Maritime Organization. She further highlighted that the Open Development Process has procedures in place to close inactive projects and to ensure continued relevance to the Program of Work. She extended thanks to the over 1600 UN/CEFACT experts who contribute to projects on the voluntary basis.

44. The secretariat informed about the review of UN/CEFACT areas of work and projects that has been initiated with the goal to prioritize activities that demonstrate tangible impact and relevance. This review will be based on criteria such as the uptake of UN/CEFACT recommendations standards and tools in policy and regulatory frameworks at the international/regional/national level, the number of experts and stakeholders involved in project work, and respective media coverage.

**Plenary decision 22-15:** The Plenary approved the *UN/CEFACT Programme of Work 2023-2024* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/21/Rev.1) subject to the change on page 13, paragraph C.

45. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2008/39/Rev.1, *Revised Extra-Budgetary Contributions to a United Nations Trust Fund for the activities of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business*. Issued at the request of the UN/CEFACT Bureau, this document outlines the procedure for extrabudgetary contributions to UN/CEFACT and represents a revised version of the document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2008/39 approved at the fourteenth session of the UN/CEFACT Plenary.

**Plenary decision 22-16:** The Plenary took note of the *Revised Extra-Budgetary Contributions to a United Nations Trust Fund for the Activities of the UN/CEFACT* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2008/39/Rev.1) and expressed its commitment to support the secretariat in mobilizing extrabudgetary funds.

### **XIII. Activities of other Economic Commission for Europe bodies and international organizations of interest to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (agenda item 7)**

46. The secretariat invited four organizational units to join and highlight areas for current and potential future cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

- (a) The ECE Transport Networks and Logistics Section presented the Inland Transport and Trade Connectivity eLearning Platform. It provides training on the UN inland transport legal instruments and trade facilitation principles, policy recommendations, standards and other tools to support stakeholders striving towards sustainable transport and smarter connectivity, and fosters trade connectivity, which can be of value to UN/CEFACT experts and partners.
- (b) The UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section outlined the active involvement of UNCTAD in the UN/CEFACT projects. It also shared about UNCTAD technical cooperation and capacity building activities in its beneficiary

countries in the areas of trade facilitation and transport, and summarized the 2021-2022 deliverables and progress of projects pertaining to the UNCTAD ASYCUDA programme and the TrainForTrade initiative.

- (c) The International Trade Centre reported that it supported the implementation of over fifty reforms in over twenty countries for the implementation of TFA obligations. It presented the publication developed jointly with ECE on the principles, strategy and a roadmap for a modern, integrated risk management system. It reiterated the role of digital solutions for paperless trade and gender responsive trade facilitation, which is an area for collaboration with UN/CEFACT.
- (d) The CITES secretariat presented its current work, particularly in relation to the need of enhancing permit and seizure information. It also referred that CITES would be ready to collaborate with UN/CEFACT on the development of risk management guidance and for a greater uptake of e-permitting systems. This would entail increased support towards the implementation of the eCITES permit management systems in developing countries.

#### **XIV. Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (agenda item 8)**

47. The Chair of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) presented the work of the group over the past period, as presented in the *Report of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) on its Activities since the Last Plenary (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/22)* as well as the Programme of Work for the period of 2022-2023 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/23/Rev.1).

48. The UN/CEFACT Plenary adopted the mandate and terms of reference, and the Programme of Work 2022-2023 for the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group through an intersessional approval procedure, held from 23 November 2021 to 23 January 2022. The Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the mandate and terms of references of the Advisory Group on the UN/LOCODE at its 121<sup>st</sup> meeting on 24 March 2022.

49. Document ECE/EX/2022/L.5, *Decisions on Matters Relating to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business* was presented to the Plenary for noting.

**Plenary decision 22-17:** The Plenary endorsed the *Report of the Advisory Group on the UN/LOCODE on its Activities since the Last Plenary (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/22)* and took note of the *Advisory Group on the UN/LOCODE Programme of Work 2022-2023 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/23/Rev.1)* as well as the *Decisions on Matters Relating to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (ECE/EX/2022/L.5)*.

#### **XV. Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy (agenda item 9)**

50. The secretariat presented the *Report of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy on its First Meeting (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/24)* for endorsement. The secretariat also informed the Plenary on the second meeting, which took place on 6 October 2022, and on key decisions taken during the meeting. At this second meeting, the Team of Specialists requested the twenty-eight UN/CEFACT Plenary to extend its mandate until 2025.

51. Then, the secretariat also presented the *Revised Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Team of Specialists* outlined in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/23/Rev.1. This

document was approved at the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT plenary session (Plenary decision 21-24).

**Plenary decision 22-18:** The Plenary endorsed the *Report of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy on its First Meeting* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/24), expressed appreciation for its work and noted the relevance of the work for the cross-cutting priority topics of the ECE sixty-ninth and seventieth Commission sessions (circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and digital and green transformations, respectively).

**Plenary decision 22-19:** The Plenary took note of the *Revised Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/23/Rev.1), decided to extend its mandate until 2025 and invited donors to explore the availability of extrabudgetary funding to support the roll-out of ECE instruments in countries with economies in transition.

## **XVI. Future challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business in the context of the Seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (agenda item 10)**

52. The seventieth session of ECE will take place in April 2023 at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva. After comprehensive consultations at its 119<sup>th</sup> meeting on 16 December 2021, the EXCOM designated a cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the seventieth session. Accordingly, ECE discussions in 2023 will focus on “*Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the ECE*” (EXCOM Informal Document No. 2021/32).

53. UN/CEFACT has been requested to prepare a brief stocktake of pertinent ECE tools and instruments, which was presented by the Chair to the Plenary covering thematic actions already completed and a short overview of relevant ongoing work (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.4).

**Plenary decision 22-20:** The Plenary took note of the *ECE Executive Secretary Request to the UN/CEFACT Chair and Reply* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/INF.4).

54. Speakers emphasised the raising attention of consumers, investors and regulators to the sustainability and information performance requirements of products and processes in sectors central to the circular transition. These include sectors such as the agri-food, critical raw materials, textile, and transport and logistics industries, that have a high impact on climate and human rights. To address such risks, solid and verified compliance with environmental, social and governance standards is key. This requires integrated action across policy and normative directions, and the introduction of financial and non-financial incentives for establishing a level playing field. It also involves measures to harness the potential of innovation and advanced technologies, and targeted action for emerging economies through technical assistance and capacity building, particularly for MSMEs. From the standard perspective, harmonization and alignment is essential to avoid that sustainability and circularity performance requirements become barriers to trade. In the area of information exchange, to support solid sustainability claims, the need for information exchange standards at the B2B, B2C and B2G level, including for the post-consumption phases of the value chain, was also stressed.

55. Speakers mentioned the relevance of ECE Recommendations No. 33 to 37 for the development of information systems in support of grain corridors in the ports of Ukraine, which led to faster data and documents processing and helped manage the risk of corruption and value chain disruptions during the ongoing conflict in the country. The support of the Regional Adviser for the development of studies on data pipelines for exports of grain from Ukraine, and the digital information exchange for trade among the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development countries and the European Union, as well as the training on the electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) Regulation and UN/CEFACT

standards, was also referred. A study on trade corridors is expected to be prepared and presented to twenty-eighth UN/CEFACT Plenary.

57. Finally, the speakers highlighted the importance of establishing trust by ways of verified credentials/decentralized identifiers-based solutions. Digital data exchange and cryptographic processes, such as e-signatures, are far from being new technologies. The digitization of business transactions with the support of advanced technologies and solutions, like JSON-LD, to validate the authenticity of a document exchange and trade transaction is a new digital green future. UN/CEFACT contributes to this by providing a library of elements that are globally harmonized, with well-defined semantics.

58. In closing the session, the Chair expressed appreciation to experts' contributions and stressed the importance of UN/CEFACT supporting its existing widely implemented deliverables, such as UN/EDIFACT, UNTDED, and UN/LOCODE.

59. The secretariat announced key dates of importance to UN/CEFACT: the thirty-ninth UN/CEFACT Forum taking place virtually on 5-6 December 2022, the seventieth ECE session scheduled in April 2023, the fortieth UN/CEFACT Forum scheduled on 8-12 May 2023, and the twenty-ninth UN/CEFACT Plenary scheduled on 22-23 November 2023. The secretariat further announced that starting from January 2023 all sessions are expected to be held in-person.

## **XVIII. Other business (agenda item 11)**

60. No other business points were raised.

## **XIX. Adoption of decisions and draft report of the twenty-eighth session (agenda item 12)**

61. In line with established practice, the secretariat read through the decisions taken during this session and the Plenary confirmed their approval.

**Plenary decision 22-21:** The Plenary approved the report and decisions of the UN/CEFACT on its twenty-eighth session (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2022/2) which, as per ECE Executive Committee decision (ECE/EX/2020/L.12), will be subject to a silence procedure in the event of technical connection difficulties of member State representatives.