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Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Report from the secretariat

**Report on the UN/LOCODE activities since the last
UN/CEFACT Plenary in 2021**

Summary

The secretariat prepared a report detailing the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) activities since the last United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Plenary in 2021.

The report provides a summary of the major activities and the developments related to UN/LOCODE, such as the informal UN/LOCODE consultation held on 8-9 November 2021, the approval by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Executive Committee (EXCOM) to renew the mandate of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group on 24 March 2022, and the UN/LOCODE maintenance.

This document is submitted to the 2022 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 followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
2. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToR), 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 the informal UN/LOCODE consultation

5. On 8-9 November 2021 the secretariat held an informal UN/LOCODE consultation to discuss important issues of concern for stakeholders.
6. During the informal consultation, the need to ask for a new mandate for the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group was discussed. The secretariat agreed to prepare a new draft Mandate and Term of Reference, as well as the draft Programme of Work (PoW) for 2022-2023. The secretariat called for recommendations and comments on the PoW before presenting it to the UN/CEFACT Bureau and to subsequently submit it to the UN/CEFACT Plenary for intersessional approval.
7. The representative from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented a paper, jointly drafted with the UNECE secretariat, proposing the use of UN/LOCODE to identify ports of FAO Global Record¹, to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The participants discussed if a fishing port should be regarded as a location in line with the concept of UNECE Recommendation 16. As a general practice, these ports should be identified with a UN/LOCODE child code, instead of a UN/LOCODE.
8. The representative from the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs presented the automatic identification system (AIS) for official statistics and experimental indicators. The participants mentioned the geofencing pilot by the Bureau of International Containers (BIC), which might be helpful for the Task Team on AIS data of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science.
9. The representative from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) reported on the outcome of its 2021 session and its programme of work and updated the participants on the World Geographical Names Database which is being redeveloped. The participants showed interest in benefiting from the UNGEGN World Geographical Names Database to standardize location names in the UN/LOCODE directory.

¹ See <https://www.fao.org/global-record/tool/extended-search/en/>.

10. In response to the queries from the user community following Brexit, the secretariat introduced five options to identify locations in Northern Ireland in UN/LOCODE. The participants had divergent views on the best way to address the issue. The preference of the representative of the UK was not to change the existing codes but to collect additional user cases to better understand the problem. The secretariat would collect comments and proposals for use of the two-character country/territory code to identify locations in Northern Ireland in UN/LOCODE and would provide a compilation at a future meeting.

11. The co-convenor of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team gave an update on UN/LOCODE maintenance and highlighted the importance of national focal points (NFPs) to actively participate in the process of validation for data maintenance requests. He also highlighted the need to discuss how to address recurrent requests to expand the use of UN/LOCODE for facilities, far upstream inland water ports, and offshore platforms.

12. The secretariat offered a certificate of appreciation to Mr. Bertrand Geoffray for having led the maintenance team as its co-convenor since 2019. The Bureau of International Containers (BIC) promised to propose a replacement for Mr. Bertrand Geoffray.

13. The secretariat presented the draft ToR for a new task force aimed to provide guidance on maintenance issues raised by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team and presented a first questionnaire based on the maintenance issues to be addressed.

14. The representative from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) presented the pilot implementation of a UN/LOCODE Application Programming Interface (API) to facilitate data synchronization between the new UN/LOCODE system and the new module “Port Management” in the IMO Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS).

15. Three representatives raised concerns about the UN/LOCODE re-engineering project. The secretariat suggested that all questions be sent in writing, and it would try to address the concerns.

III. Overview of new developments

16. In 2021, the secretariat, supported by the Maintenance Team, has processed two updates to the UN/LOCODE: Directory 2021-1 and Directory 2021-2. These were prepared and published on the UNECE website in July and December 2021, as scheduled.²

17. 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 Djibouti, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, and the renominations of France, India, Japan, Pakistan, and Sweden.³

18. The secretariat attended, online, the 46th Session of the Facilitation Committee (FAL 46) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and requested to join the correspondence group on the development of guidelines for harmonized communication and electronic exchange of operational data for port call. UN/LOCODE has been officially adopted by IMO to identify ports. However, the draft document, submitted by the correspondence group, mentions the possible use of GS1 Global Location Numbers (GLNs) in parallel with UN/LOCODE. The UN/LOCODE secretariat will contact the IMO secretariat to understand the IMO position on this.

19. Since 2020, the secretariat has established a liaison with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) that provides support to countries to develop and refine programmes for the standardization of geographical names. The UNGEGN World Geographical Names Database is a repository of short and full names of countries (193 United Nations Member States), capitals, and major cities (population

² See <http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>.

³ See <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/unlocode/NFPs>.

over 100,000), maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). To contextualize and visualize data provided by Member States in an accessible manner and to comply with the instructions provided by UNGEGN, the functionality of the UNGEGN World Geographical Names Database has been upgraded using the United Nations Clear Map service of the Office of Information Communication Technology (OICT). The new database was recently launched. UNGEGN contacted the UN/LOCODE secretariat to explore the possibility of having a unique identifier for each city in the database. However, it is not a one-to-one mapping as there are multiple UN/LOCODEs assigned to big cities. The secretariat has invited a representative from DESA to provide a demonstration of their database at the next UN/LOCODE Advisory Group meeting and to provide UN/LOCODE with the opportunity to begin using standardized location names from the UNGEGN database.

IV. UN/LOCODE maintenance

20. Upon the proposal of BIC, the UN/CEFACT Chair appointed Ms. Maria Teresa Chavarri as the interim Convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to support the secretariat in managing the validation of the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs). The secretariat is grateful to Ms. Chavarri for carrying on this important work and also thanks Mr. Bertrand Geoffray, the former co-convenor, for transferring his knowledge and valuable assistance to the interim convener.

21. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team has been working with the collaborative maintenance procedure to improve the UN/LOCODE data quality following the requirements of Recommendation 16⁴ and the DMR validation rules. The team benefitted from the collaboration between the public and private sectors. In fact, this international team consists of national UN/LOCODE focal points appointed by governments, industry experts, and the secretariat.

22. 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.

23. An ad-hoc meeting of the maintenance team will be organized back-to-back with the next meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. The objective of this meeting will be to discuss the maintenance issues raised during the process of validation for DMRs and to provide clarifications. This ad-hoc meeting will avoid the need to set up a new task force as it was proposed during the informal UN/LOCODE consultation.

V. Anticipated issues

24. 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.

25. Since the discussion during the informal UN/LOCODE consultation of 8-9 November 2021, the secretariat has not received any additional queries concerning country/territory code used in UN/LOCODE that identify locations in Northern Ireland. Considering that the UK representative, during the informal UN/LOCODE consultation,

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>.

preferred not to make any changes in the current UN/LOCODE code list until more user cases were submitted, the secretariat suggests maintaining the status quo.
