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Structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures

Revised rules of procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau

Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau for noting

Summary

The original rules of procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau were approved at the twelfth session, in May 2006, in document TRADE/R.650/Rev.4/Add.2. Revised rules of procedure were submitted to the sixteenth session in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17; the seventeenth session took up revisions (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.1 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.2); and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.3 was approved at the eighteenth session. The current revision includes suggestions based on the Bureau's experience since the eighteenth session. It is being submitted for review and approval.

Previous documentation:

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.3

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.2

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17/Rev.1

ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/17

TRADE/R.650/Rev.4/Add.2

I. Introduction

1. This document comprises the Rules of Procedure for the UN/CEFACT Bureau. These rules are based on the revised mandate, terms of reference and procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15).

II. Chair

2. The Chair, with the assistance of vice-chairs of the Bureau and the UNECE secretariat, is responsible for preparing the programme of work for approval by the Plenary, with a view to providing a coherent framework that serves the needs of United Nations Member States and other stakeholders within the context of UN/CEFACT's mandate and terms of reference. This involves outreach to and collaboration with those parties interested in working with UN/CEFACT to achieve common goals and, wherever possible, to avoid duplication of work both within and outside of UN/CEFACT.

3. The Chair, with the assistance of the vice-chairs and the UNECE secretariat, is responsible for scheduling, coordinating and developing agendas for meetings of the Plenary, the Bureau and UN/CEFACT experts.

4. Following consultation with the Bureau, the Chair will invite one or more vice-chairs to assist in formulating, guiding and monitoring the programme of work through Programme Development Areas (PDAs), which involve groups of experts focused on projects and related domains. In particular, PDAs address strategic issues in trade facilitation and electronic business, and provide advice on these issues to the Plenary. The Chair should inform the Plenary of these arrangements and any adjustments considered by the Bureau to improve the deliverables.

III. Principal functions of the Bureau

5. The Bureau consists of a Chair and at least four vice-chairs.

6. It is responsible to the Plenary for the open, transparent and efficient functioning of UN/CEFACT and the implementation of its programme of work.

7. Bureau members act in their personal capacity, and must not represent any special interests of their countries or institutions.

8. The principal functions of the Bureau are:

(a) To manage the ongoing strategic planning and coordination of the UN/CEFACT programme of work between Plenary sessions;

(b) To verify that UN/CEFACT activities comply with its mandate, terms of reference and procedures;

(c) To prepare UN/CEFACT meetings, including those of the Plenary, the Bureau and UN/CEFACT experts, in collaboration with the secretariat;

(d) To appoint and guide experts supporting the programme of work, within a structure that can organize experts, projects and key domains in Programme Development Areas, each of which will be supervised by at least one Vice-Chair;

(e) To develop and maintain procedures associated with reviewing and launching project proposals, especially those submitted for the development of UNECE

recommendations and UN/CEFACT standards (which must be accompanied by written expressions of support from three UN/CEFACT country heads of delegation) and, as necessary, to approve the formation of project teams and appoint project leaders, subject to the provisions of the UN/CEFACT Open Development Process;

(f) To promote opportunities for outreach, cooperation and collaboration in order to advance projects supporting the programme of work, particularly through meetings of experts;

(g) With the support of the secretariat, to ensure coherence in matters relating to policy, promotion, communication, cooperation and capacity-building, particularly concerning joint activities with other bodies;

(h) To be accountable for operational and support functions of UN/CEFACT activities (e.g. project control, maintenance of UN/EDIFACT and other UN/CEFACT libraries), with the support of the secretariat, experts and task teams.

9. The full responsibilities of the Bureau are set out in the revised mandate, terms of reference and procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3).

10. The vice-chairs assist the Chair in meeting the requirements of the full portfolio of responsibilities held by the Bureau.

11. To fulfil their responsibilities, the Bureau may be supported by experts nominated by Plenary delegations. The Bureau may, subject to UNECE rules, also appoint advisers and task teams to support its activities - for example to focus on particular aspects of the programme of work and related proposals for projects in a Programme Development Area. The roles and purpose of advisers and task teams, as well as those involved in such support, will be reported to the Plenary.

12. The Bureau must establish a code of conduct for all participants and, within the procedures associated with its monitoring, the Bureau may nominate an advisor to address specific matters of concern.

13. Failure by a member of the Bureau to participate constructively in the work of the Bureau may lead to the Chair and/or the Bureau asking the respective Head of Delegation and/or the Plenary to find a replacement for this person.

IV. Work items

14. The UN/CEFACT programme of work is prepared for Plenary approval on the basis of detailed procedures that are consistent with the mandate, terms of reference and procedures of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/15/Rev.3).

15. Projects submitted to the Bureau should be within the programme of work. Should a proposed project be outside the bounds of the programme of work, the Bureau will bring this to the attention of the Plenary and may request an adjustment to the programme of work.

16. The Bureau will appoint Project Leaders and will indicate which of the stages of the Open Development Process (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2010/24) apply to specific projects. The Bureau will monitor the progress of the projects. Information about the progress will be provided regularly by project teams and will be available on the UN/CEFACT website, which is maintained by the secretariat.

17. Following Bureau procedures, developments in the programme of work and related action items are taken up regularly, decisions recorded and, as necessary, key discussions duly noted.

V. Decisions

18. If any matter requires a formal decision of the Bureau, the Bureau should be informed and receive the related documents not later than one month before the decision is to be taken. In exceptional cases, the Bureau may accept a shorter or longer submission period.
19. The preferred way of reaching decisions shall be by consensus during meetings or by written procedure.
20. For the Bureau to take formal decisions, a quorum of the Bureau must participate. Before taking a formal decision, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, the Chair and all Bureau members need to have been informed by written procedure and be invited to indicate their views by a specified date. Should the Chair call for a vote, because no decision could be reached by consensus, all Bureau members need to be invited by written procedure to cast their votes by a specified date.
21. A quorum for a decision is constituted by participation of a simple majority of Bureau members (i.e. Chair plus vice-chairs) in a meeting or by written procedure.
22. According to Bureau procedures, meetings can be face-to-face as well as via electronic/virtual teleconferences.
23. If consensus cannot be reached on an issue, the Chair has the authority to call for a vote.
24. A simple majority of participants is sufficient to carry a motion.
25. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair has the casting vote.
26. The Chair must ensure that Bureau decisions are recorded and published. A summary report of these decisions must be provided to the Plenary.

VI. Meetings

27. The Bureau meets at least once between Plenary sessions. Additional meetings may also be held at the invitation of the Chair.
28. Bureau procedures apply both to face-to-face and to electronic/virtual teleconference sessions.
29. Specific dates or a schedule of meetings should be agreed, usually with at least two weeks' notice.
30. Bureau members should make every effort to attend meetings, including the sessions of the Plenary and the forums.
31. For reasons of good order, members should give advance notice to the Bureau if they are unable to attend meetings. The Chair should take up the matter of attendance at Bureau meetings with any member of the Bureau absent from more than half such meetings held between Plenary sessions. In exceptional cases of continual absences, this must be taken up by the Chair with the Head of Delegation who nominated the Bureau member and, as necessary, reported to the Plenary.
32. The UN/CEFACT Chair shall preside over the Bureau meetings. In the absence of the Chair at a Bureau meeting, and if the Chair is unable to appoint a replacement, the Bureau will agree (by consensus) on a replacement for the duration of the meeting as the first item of the agenda of the meeting.

33. The Bureau may invite rapporteurs and others to participate in Bureau meetings and discussions.

VII. Procedures regarding official requests from heads of Plenary delegations

34. Official requests from heads of Plenary delegations to the Bureau may either be expressed orally at Plenary sessions or other meetings, submitted as documents for or during Plenary sessions, or sent (independently of any meeting), to the secretariat or direct to the Bureau.

35. The secretariat creates and maintains a roster of such requests. Requests sent to the Bureau should be transmitted by the Bureau to the secretariat within one week of receipt.

36. Receipt of any request from a Head of Plenary Delegation must be confirmed within ten days. Depending upon the subject, the Bureau and/or the secretariat decide on how to address the request. A response to the Head of Plenary Delegation (or governmental authority) must be sent within six weeks of its receipt. If a deadline cannot be met, the Bureau will provide an explanation.

37. Official requests and replies to delegations may be made available to all heads of Plenary delegations electronically (e.g. through the appropriate e-mail list) at the discretion of the Head of Plenary Delegation making the request.

38. Heads of Plenary Delegation should be informed regularly about policy-related or other important topics raised in the official requests received.

VIII. Communication

39. The Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, will ensure timely communication of UN/CEFACT developments, mainly through the website.

IX. Filling mid-term vacancies

40. The Bureau should establish procedures to fill mid-term vacancies in its membership.

41. Mid-term vacancies should be filled by decision of the Bureau and must be notified to the heads of Plenary delegation, pending ratification at the subsequent Plenary.

X. Documentation

42. The Bureau will make available supplementary documentation concerning its plans, activities and procedures, as may be appropriate, including policies and strategies for implementing its mandate; for example, strategies within and across programme development areas concerning envisaged projects, liaison policy, communication strategy, library maintenance procedures involving Bureau approval, project review procedures, event management, "one voice" procedures for presentations on UN/CEFACT, calendars of forthcoming events.